

*11: Hc 96*  
**DEISM REFUTED,**  
**AND**  
**REVELATION VINDICATED:**

**IN THREE PARTS.** *702. c 16*

**IN THE FIRST IS SHEWN THE FALLACY OF  
THE DEISTICAL ARGUMENTATION.** *3*

**IN THE SECOND IS VINDICATED THE IN-  
SPIRATION OF MOSES.**

**AND IN THE THIRD THE DIVINE MISSION  
OF JESUS CHRIST.**

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**By JAMES SMITH,** *K.*  
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**M.DCC.XCVI.**

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**THIS BOOK IS ENTERED IN STATIONERS  
HALL, IN TERMS OF THE ACT OF  
PARLIAMENT.**

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VINDICATION  
OF  
REVELATION.

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PART I.

OBSERVATIONS RESPECTING THE DEISTICAL  
CONTROVERSY.

**T**HE subject of litigation between Deists and Christians, is of the utmost importance to the present and future happiness of mankind, and ought to be discussed in the most candid and dispassionate manner.

The following observations may be useful to those who have been misled by publications in favour of Deism.

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SECT. I. *The situation of the contending parties.*

WERE the propagators of infidelity to succeed in persuading the people that the laws and doctrines of Christianity are not enjoined by God's authority, and that we have no cause to be afraid of that future judgment which is mentioned in the scriptures; what fruit could be expected from the belief of this opinion? Would it not break down the principal bounds of morality, and overwhelm mankind with vice and misery?

I pity the poor man who is beguiled into a disbelief of the scriptures; for he loses the only hope which supported him under his rigorous fate, while grim death recovers all those terrors which were taken away by a belief of the gospel.

The certain tendency of deism is, to promote the misery and degradation of the human race; while Christianity is evidently calculated to alleviate our miseries, and exalt our nature. This important fact, which has been well illustrated by other authors, and confirmed from experience, is a strong evidence that our holy religion, so very beneficial to man,  
cannot

cannot be disapproved by the Father of our spirits.

But supposing the Christian to be in a mistake, respecting the origin of his religion, what is the nature, and what the tendency of his error? He believes certain persons to have been inspired who were not, and receives their doctrines as a revelation from God: if he act consistently with this belief he becomes more happy, more amiable, more useful, and a better member of society. In these books which he believes to have been written by inspiration, his duty to his God, his neighbour, and himself, is clearly set forth and strongly enforced.

As Christianity comprehends all that is meant by natural religion, the principal doctrine peculiar to it is the atonement by our Saviour. This is a doctrine which sets forth, in an affecting light, the fatal tendency of sin, and the purity of the divine perfections; while it affords the strongest encouragement for genuine penitents to hope for mercy from God.

If the Deist be in a mistake, what is the nature and what the tendency of his error? He rejects the counsel of God against his own soul, and following the devices of a wicked heart, brings on him-

self certain destruction. If the Christian be in a mistake, his error consists in revering God's authority where it does not extend; but if his religion be from God, then deists are guilty of contending against the Almighty, and therefore exposed to the dreadful judgments denounced against such, in the scriptures. My soul bleeds for those who apostatize, after they have been enlightened with the knowledge of revelation, and have tasted the comforts of the gospel: their situation resembles the condition of irreclaimable rebels, combined against an established government; they must either conquer or be involved in eternal ruin.

It is God and not man by whom both parties will be finally tried: on him no creature can impose; it might therefore be expected that the deists, who contend against revelation under such *dreadful perils*, would manage the controversy with the utmost candour and integrity. I am sorry to find the conduct of deists, in general, the very reverse; as will be shewn in the following sections.

SECT.

SECT. II. *The uncandid manner in which  
Deists treat the Ministers of Christianity.*

THE rancour, which the propagators of infidelity display against the ministers of Christianity, is very conspicuous in all their publications. The learning of the Clergy, their influence in society, their diligence in defending the truth, and in promoting the interests of morality, render them formidable opponents to the ministers of Deism. In place of meeting, these advocates for revelation in the field of controversy, with fair reasoning, the supporters of infidelity vilify the character of their opponents, ridicule their office, and employ contemptible artifices to prejudice mankind against the ministers of religion; whom in derision they usually call *the Priests*. In this manner they endeavour to persuade the people that our holy religion is nothing but *mere priestcraft*, and that they ought not to hear the arguments of these interested men, who defend Christianity because they live by the altar.

Is it candid to treat the defence of religion by her ministers as suspicious, because they are rewarded for the faithful

execution of their sacred office? Do not the citizens expect to be warned, when danger approaches, by those watchmen who are paid for that very purpose? Is the shepherd less bound to feed and defend his flock because it is the means of his support? and is the faithfulness of those men, to whom is entrusted the defence of truth, to be treated as interested and suspicious, because they are rewarded for their labours? where then is the foundation for that ridicule which deists pour out upon the teachers of Christianity for vindicating their holy religion? or is it any discredit to the Christian cause that it is warmly supported by those to whom its defence is solemnly entrusted?

Let mankind, therefore, beware of being deceived by that artful declamation, about *priestcraft*, which is so very absurd, tho' employed by almost every deist against revelation. It is not denied, that wicked and deceitful men have, in all ages, crept into the sacred office, and that much art has been employed by such men in corrupting Christianity, and in prostituting it as a pretext for committing the vilest crimes: but what connection is there between the wickedness and deceit of these priests, and the sincere defence of religion

religion by its faithful ministers? Upon the whole, it would be more for the credit of deistical writers, in this controversy, to weigh with candour the *defence*, than to waste their wit and arguments upon the office and situation of the *defendants*.

SECT. III. *The deistical method of argumentation absurd.*

THE method of attack, in publications against revelation, is usually, first to misrepresent, and then to condemn, the scriptures. The corruption of Christianity by the papists, and the erroneous opinions of different churches, are artfully employed in representing revelation as unworthy of God: the most obscure and mysterious parts of the scriptures are also represented in a ridiculous light; in order to persuade mankind that the whole is an absurd fiction.

This sophistry is very palpable, and might be employed with much more plausibility, by an atheist, in proving that the world is too bad to be made by an infinitely wise being.

The student of nature knows, that those very parts of the creation which had

been ridiculed by the ignorant as instances of very imperfect operations; when better understood, are admired as a wonderful display of God's wisdom and goodness: Such too are those parts of revelation against which deists object as unworthy of God; instances of which have frequently been illustrated by the friends of religion.

The same artifices, which are still employed against Christianity, were formerly practised against Christ himself. The Jews misrepresented his words and actions, they arrayed him in the badges of mock royalty; then brought him forth to the people, and on their bended knees cried, in derision; "Hail king of the Jews." Thus they imposed on the multitude, in order to procure their consent to his crucifixion. To persuade mankind to reject the scriptures, as false and absurd, deists misrepresent them in an artful manner, and then condemn them, when thus exhibited in a dress very foreign to their nature and tendency. It is unnecessary to quote instances; they abound in every deistical publication with which I am acquainted, and have been sufficiently refuted by different authors.

In order to persuade the multitude that  
our

our Saviour deserved to die, his murderers crucified him between two thieves, as if he had been the most eminent criminal.

A similar artifice is practised by Volney and other deistical authors against Christianity: A very unjust representation of our holy religion is placed in the midst of those false religions, which prevailed among the superstitious heathens, in order to lead the people into an opinion, that Christianity is no better than those absurd and profane rites, by which the ignorant Gentiles were degraded.

In the same manner those authors rank the miracles which were performed by Jesus and Moses with those by which impostors have deceived the world; and, without a fair trial, pronounce all religions, and all miracles, alike false and absurd.

These authors require no other refutation but fairly to state their argument and method of reasoning. It requires, however, great art to employ such arguments, and conceal their absurdity. Tho' there are many deceitful and wicked persons in the world, would it be a just inference to affirm, that there is not an honest man in all the human race? and is it not equally unjust to conclude, that neither Christi-

anity nor the miracles, which its author is said to have wrought, can be true, because there have been many false religions and false miracles imposed upon the world.

If we examine the different religions which have prevailed among mankind, with the conduct and pretensions of successful impostors; we will find such a similarity in the principal parts as renders it probable, that there is some common standard, some genuine revelation, established by real miracles, from which they have all copied.

The vices of those who profess Christianity, and especially of its teachers, have been urged in all ages as a proof of its falsehood. The vices of mankind may be mentioned with propriety as an evidence that the interests of morality require the assistance of a revelation; but it is an insult offered to common sense to bring them forward as an evidence, that no revelation is given to men.—Tho' the principles of religion do not influence many who profess to believe them, does this prove that they are not enjoined by divine authority? If deists would remember that the subject of controversy between them and Christians is the truth of revelation, and not the character of their opponents,

nents, they might blot out three-fourths of their publications.

SECT. IV. *The precise subject of litigation.*

THE artifice, with which the advocates for infidelity evade the chief point at issue, and direct the controversy to circumstances which do not affect the principal question, is very remarkable. The real subject of controversy between the deists and Christians is this plain question; *Does the Christian's Bible contain a revelation from God?*

The possibility of a revelation cannot be called in question by those who believe that there is a God. Deists frequently argue, that it is not necessary. Tho' mankind may speculate concerning our need of a revelation, yet that is not the subject of dispute. God is the only competent judge of what is necessary; he alone knows what good is appointed for mankind, and what are the fittest means for making us happy. Neither can the meaning of particular passages in the scriptures be the subject of litigation in this controversy. These may be the subject of dispute among Christians, but not between them and deists. In the volume of nature

ture there are mysteries which we do not understand ; and in the volume of revelation there are obscure and mysterious passages. As these mysteries in nature are no proof that the material world is not made by God ; so the mysterious and obscure passages in the scriptures are no evidence, that our Bible does not contain a revelation from him. The controversy hitherto has chiefly turned upon passages, against which, no objection can affect the real subject at issue. The manner in which deists manage this subject is truly ridiculous : they argue as if they knew what God ought to say, were he to grant us a revelation ; and because he does not speak in the manner in which they imagine he ought to have spoken, they therefore conclude that we have no revelation from him. It is highly presumptuous in men to determine what it may please God either to do, or to command ; and therefore whether particular passages of the scriptures be proper or improper for God to reveal to us, cannot be the subject of litigation in this dispute. From these, and other topics foreign to the principal question, it is necessary to call back the attention of mankind, to the *main point*, which is a simple *matter of fact*. Christians

tians affirm that they possess a revelation from God. The business of deists is to call for the proof of that assertion, and examine if it be satisfactory. Supposing a revelation were given to mankind, it would be unreasonable to expect it to be communicated, in a supernatural manner, to every individual. This therefore is not what the Christian asserts; he maintains that God inspired a few persons, on different occasions, with the knowledge of important truths; which are recorded in the scriptures, for the benefit of mankind in all ages. The controversy concerning the truth of revelation must be determined, therefore, by the decision of *this question*; were those men inspired whose whole doctrines are recorded in our sacred writings? The question must be decided by the evidences produced, in support of their divine commission.

If the Christian be able to establish *that fact*, which is the subject of litigation, by proving the inspiration of the author of his holy religion, his business with the deist is finished: he is not accountable for difficulties in the scriptures; it is enough for him to be certain that they contain a revelation from God.

SECT.

SECT. V. *Evidences of Inspiration.*

BY *inspiration* is meant a revelation from God to some particular person, who is infallibly directed in communicating it to the world.

If it should please God to bestow on man a revelation, we have reason to expect that it would be accompanied with evidences, sufficient to satisfy every reasonable creature of its truth. The truth of revelation depends on the reality of their inspiration by whom it is communicated unto us.

Of those who are said to have been inspired, the persons with whom we are chiefly concerned are Moses, the founder of Judaism, and Jesus, the author of Christianity. If these two great personages had a divine commission, then Judaism and Christianity came from God, and we are bound to receive them as a revelation from him.

I mention Moses and Jesus together, because they testified concerning the inspiration of one another: if therefore we can prove the inspiration of the one, his testimony establishes the authority of the other.

As

As many have pretended to inspiration, who were deceitful impostors; by what evidences shall we know that a person has received a divine commission? If a man receive a commission from God, to teach in his name; there is every reason to suppose, that it will be so well attested as to satisfy the unprejudiced. As some captious persons will quarrel at the best evidences which can be produced; the question is not, what *will* satisfy all men, but what *ought* to satisfy them? Unquestionable miracles, and the accomplishment of predictions, respecting events which no human penetration could foresee; have been deemed by mankind, in all ages, the best evidences of inspiration, which can be given.

Altho' the nature and tendency of the doctrines which are taught, by those who lay claim to inspiration, may add to, or diminish the strength of other evidences; yet if these doctrines be not contrary to the fundamental principles of morality, no decisive argument can be founded on them, either for or against such teachers. The reason is obvious: impostors may propose very plausible institutions, and rational doctrines; while those who are inspired may be appointed to publish doctrines,

trines, which appear absurd to us, because we are not competent judges of their utility and design. The principal artifice of deists, in their attack upon Christianity, is to avoid a fair trial of the evidences which they produced who were said to be inspired, and boldly to condemn the doctrines which were delivered.

Altho' no objections against particular parts of revelation can affect the evidences of the fact, if they be sufficiently clear; yet I shall notice the two principal ones, which are urged by the advocates for infidelity.

The first in order is the doctrine of our fall in Adam. We cannot know how man was made, or the particular situation of the first pair, without a revelation. Moses, who produced evidences of inspiration, relates the creation and original state of our first parents. Deists, in place of examining these evidences, deny the truth of the narration, because it does not please them. If they could prove that his account of the creation and fall of man is false, by producing a different one, attested by better authority, then this would invalidate his claim to inspiration: for no man endued with inspiration can be guilty of relating a falsehood. In this manner

Deists

Deists never pretended to contradict Moses. All that they can do is to express their disapprobation of God's treatment of Adam, as related by Moses. Can their disapprobation of this subject be any argument against his inspiration? Reason, not to mention revelation, suggests, "God's ways are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts." How unbecoming the condition of a creature is it then, for men positively to determine what is fit and what is unfit for God to do? This is not the only absurdity of the Deists objection against the *fall*. An artful misrepresentation of the subject, so as to place it in a ridiculous light, is the foundation on which the objection rests. The account of the fall, as related by Moses, is simple and rational.

When man was created, God condescended to instruct his unexperienced mind. Adam was informed, that if he and his posterity were obedient to the law of their Maker, they would be happy in this world, and also in the world to come. Our first parents were then put under a state of trial. God gave them a plain and easy precept, as a preparation for the system of grace. The precept was wisely adapted to the infant state of human nature.

ture. Their early transgression of that law was a humbling lesson to them and their posterity, of our weakness, and the necessity of that dispensation under which man has ever since remained.

On the rock where Adam struck is erected a *beacon* with this inscription; "Man, do not forfeit all hopes of heaven, like Adam, for a morsel of sensual pleasure!"

In examining the charge which Moses delivered to the Jews concerning the extirpation of the Canaanites, against which much has been said, we ought to distinguish a *particular command* adapted to a singular case, from a *general rule* of conduct.

As a trial of the faith and obedience of Abraham, God displayed his sovereignty and dominion over all his creatures, by commanding him to offer up his son Isaac upon the altar. This is very different from a *general law* requiring every parent to sacrifice his first-born unto the Lord: the one is consistent with the perfections, the other contrary to the nature, of God.

The extirpation of the Canaanites was a particular command, in order to accomplish a great and important purpose: it was the same thing, in God's government, with

with the sentence of death upon a criminal, in civil society. When God sees it necessary to punish a family or nation with death, he knows best how to execute the criminals. If the sentence come from him we are sure it is just; and it alters not its nature whether the executioner be an earthquake, a deluge, the famine, the pestilence, or the sword. If the Deists call in question the justice of this sentence against the Canaanites, they may with equal propriety arraign the divine government for the destruction of human beings by earthquakes, storms, diseases, accidents, and other causes of death in all ages. In *these cases* the sentence is usually executed without any intimation of it to the sufferer: but in *this affair*, it was publicly intimated to the criminals, long before it was executed, that they might have time to repent. Before the Canaanites were punished, their abominations and vices were so great, that the land is said to spue them out.

As no creature can object against this sentence, without opposing God's undoubted prerogative; so neither can his choice of an executioner be disputed, without the highest arrogance and presumption.

C

God

God employed an angel to execute a sentence of death upon the first-born of man and beast in Egypt; and he charged the Jews with the execution of his just judgments upon the nations in Canaan: as they were all equally guilty, no particular family or nation was exseemed. Had invisible agents been employed, as in the case of the first-born in Egypt; or any other mean of destruction but the sword in the hand of the Israelites, no objection could have been made. Can it therefore alter the propriety of the sentence that God executed those criminals by means of the Jews? This dispensation of providence was one of the most awful moral lessons that had been given to the nations since the universal deluge. When the Israelites came into the land of Canaan, to extirpate those depraved nations, they exhibited sufficient evidences that the Lord of the universe had sent them. The miracles performed in Egypt and the wilderness, the passage of the twelve tribes through the river Jordan, and the miraculous overthrow of Jerico, were a sufficient testimony that God was with them.

Tho' the greater part of the Canaanites opposed the Jews, and combined to destroy those executioners whom God sent

to

to extirpate them; yet others fled, as we learn from ancient history, and carried with them, into other nations, an awful warning of heaven's vengeance against vice.

When judgments are executed by means of earthquakes, diseases, and other natural causes, mankind, especially when greatly depraved, seldom view the hand of God in their sufferings; but in this case it was rendered visible by the commission given to the Israelites.

A few of the young Canaanites, who were not of age to be debauched with the vices of their fathers, were saved and incorporated with the Jews; that their posterity might remain, to keep up the remembrance of the judgments inflicted on their fathers, as an awful warning to the wicked in all ages.

This singular dispensation was remarkably calculated to check the progress of vice in other nations, and to prevent the Jews from committing those crimes for which, with their own hands, and by an express commission from God, they had extirpated the Canaanites.

Upon the whole, we may say of this dispensation (which is the chief thing against which plausible objections are offered)

ed) what Paul said of the rejection of the Jews themselves; " Behold therefore the  
 " goodness and severity of God : on them  
 " which fell severity; but towards thee  
 " goodness, if thou continue in his good-  
 " ness; otherwise thou also shall be cut  
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SECT. VI. *The evidences of Inspiration, as  
 founded on Miracles and Prophecies, re-  
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IN the former section it was observed,  
 that miracles and prophecies are the most  
 satisfactory evidences of inspiration.

By a miracle is meant an operation  
 which no creature can perform with the  
 means by which it is produced. We are  
 far from being acquainted with the full  
 extent of the laws of nature. Some of  
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 tions are not miraculous: the same means  
 employed by any other person, in the same  
 manner, would produce the very same ef-  
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In real miracles God renders the exer-  
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 we have no other instances sufficiently at-  
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tested, but those recorded in the scriptures. Real miracles resemble sound reasoning; the more they are examined, the more they are satisfactory: they are of such a nature as to remove, from our mind, all suspicion of even the possibility of imposition or fraud.

False miracles, like false reasoning, impose only on the ignorant; but will not bear a strict investigation. The more that any man is acquainted with the works of God, the more he will be convinced, that it is absolutely impossible for any man, by the same means, to perform the operations which are said to have been wrought by Moses and Jesus Christ.

Moses went forward in the presence of the Israelites, and with his rod divided the waters of the red Sea, so as to make a passage for the people.

Every rational creature must be convinced that no man could do this, by the means which Moses employed. This was not performed by any unknown power in nature; for Moses employed no other instrument but the branch of an almond-tree. As the operation could not be performed by the means which Moses employed, and was contrary to the known laws of nature, an invisible power must

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have divided the waters. When Moses employed the same instrument, in the same manner, on the river Nile, the waters were turned into blood; when he smote the dust of the earth with this rod, the dust was instantly transformed into living vermin. These very different operations produced by the easy motion of a rod in the hand of Moses, must have been effected by some *invisible power*. Such too is the nature of the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus Christ. They exclude all suspicion of fraud, were open, fair, and unquestionably beyond the power of any human being to perform by the same means.

In arguing concerning these operations; as a proof of inspiration, we must have recourse to first principles which are granted by both parties, and on which all our reasoning must ultimately rest; as

1. There is a God possessed of every possible perfection.

2. This God made and governs the universe.

3. Visible operations, such as I have mentioned, which we are certain could not be performed by the means which the agent employed, must be the effect of some invisible power.

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4. These miraculous operations must ultimately be ascribed to the infinite power of God; either immediately exerted, or by the instrumentality of some invisible agent acting under him.

5. God never performed any supernatural operation to deceive and mislead mankind, or to support the character of an impostor.

6. Neither has he given to any creature a power of working miracles on earth for the purpose of deceiving mankind; for that would virtually be the same thing, as if he were to deceive us by his own immediate operation: if therefore this power be conferred on any creature, he will be limited in the exercise of it for the sole purpose of establishing truth.

These principles are equally applicable to the *gift of Prophecy*. If any man foretell a number of future events which we are certain no human penetration could foresee, then that man must have received information of futurity, either immediately from God, or some invisible agent acting under him.

The men on whom the gift of prophecy is conferred, must be limited in the exercise of it, so as to be infallibly kept from employing it as a mean to deceive mankind.

kind. As this supernatural gift is an undoubted evidence that he who possesses it has God's authority to deliver a particular message unto the world; if that person were permitted to employ this authority to deceive mankind, it would virtually be the same thing as if we were deceived by a voice from heaven. We may therefore conclude, with certainty, that neither the gift of prophecy nor the power of working miracles was ever employed for any other purpose but that of establishing the truth. Tho' mankind do not develop the principles on which the conviction is founded, yet it has been general, that the person who possesses the power of working miracles and the gift of prophecy, has God's authority to teach in his name. When Moses smote the river, and the waters were transformed into blood, or cast down his rod and it became a serpent, these effects were evidently produced by the power of God. The outward act of Moses was merely a sign to connect the miracles with the end for which they were wrought; and this end was to prove that God sent Moses to deliver a message in his name to Pharaoh.

The miracles recorded in the scriptures which Jesus is said to have performed are

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so various, so frequently wrought, and were never attempted without immediate success, that all rational creatures must assent to the opinion of Nicodemus who witnessed them; "We know thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do the miracles which thou doest except God be with him."

Our Saviour appealed to the common sense of mankind when he said to the Jews; "The works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father sent me. If I do not the works of my Father (or such works as none but God can perform) believe me not."

The predictions recorded in the scriptures are so numerous, the events foretold so extraordinary and unexpected, that a series of operations is not a more satisfactory proof of the agent's life than these predictions are of the prophet's inspiration. To these infallible evidences of inspiration did both Moses and our Lord Jesus Christ appeal. "Now I tell you before it come to pass, said our Lord to his disciples, that when it is come to pass ye may believe that I am he."

When two hundred and fifty princes, famous in the congregation of Israel, gathered themselves together against Moses; he

he assembled the many thousands who were in danger of being infected with the spirit of sedition, and said unto them; " Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me: if these men die the common death of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me: but if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked God," by opposing his authority in me.

A fairer trial of a divine commission could not be proposed. The prediction was exactly fulfilled, and vindicated the injured character of Moses.

SECT. VII. *Former observations exemplified from Dr Francis' Letters to Bishop Watson.*

THE foregoing sections were prepared for the press before I saw the Letters of Dr Francis to Bishop Watson. I did not quote examples in confirmation of the general remarks which have been made; not only because the same observations have been illustrated by other authors, but also because the passages on which they  
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are founded are palpable and numerous, in all the publications against revelation with which I am acquainted.

Dr Francis comes forth against revelation with every possible advantage. He has no small share of *erudition*, and possesses considerable abilities: he had an opportunity of profiting by the labours of those who went before him in the same argument, and by the answers of Christian authors.

These considerations induce me to show that even in this late publication there are still the same gross abuse of Christian ministers, the same palpable misrepresentation of revelation, the same false reasoning and departure from the controverted question, as in the writings of the former propagators of infidelity.

In pages 4, and 5, Dr Francis begins with lamenting that Bishop Watson has not laid aside the *clerical* passion for the extermination of the heterodox, &c.—that author goes on to mention his dislike of those clergy who *persecute and deceive* the multitude, and the dogmatical dictates of bigotted priests; and then tells the Bishop, “ Sir, your predecessors of all “ beliefs have ever persecuted philoso- “ phers and enquirers into truth both in “ sciences

“ sciences and in religion :”—and in the  
 “ Bible they found authorities for their  
 “ inveterate opposition to the progress of  
 “ truth and knowledge.”—And in page 6.  
 “ By the Bible they live, and it is not un-  
 “ common to hear the parson deride in  
 “ private what he preaches from the pul-  
 “ pit.”

This is only a small specimen of that  
 invective which abounds through the  
 whole publication. As to reasoning the  
 author intimates that this is reserved for  
 a *future publication*, page 2. It is far from  
 being uncandid to say that the present  
 work consists chiefly of *railing*, like others  
 that have gone before him, against the  
 Clergy, Moses, the Jews, Revelation, and  
 the God of Israel.

Of Moses it is said, page 39. “ What  
 “ that monster who ordered thousands of  
 “ his credulous followers to be murdered  
 “ —because Korah, Dathan and Abiram  
 “ could not suffer to see him usurping all  
 “ the power, he murders them.” Page  
 40. “ I know of none so barbarous as the  
 “ Jews, whose legislator was obliged to  
 “ fly from Egypt for murder, a perfect  
 “ assassin.”

I will not stain this page with instances  
 of that author's profane declamations a-  
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gainst God and religion; but go on to quote some of those gross *misrepresentations* on which his accusations are founded.

Page 113. "Is it consistent with a deity to punish this pair and all their progeny for their *attempt to know good from evil?*" We here find that the priests "have made God expressly *after their own image.*" Page 76. "O superstition!—that persuades *all Christians* that water washeth away sin, and that if a child happens to die before his face is sprinkled he must inevitably suffer everlasting torments." Page 112. "Christ orders his followers *to despise the reason he has given them,*" &c.

Like other publications against revelation, Dr Francis' Letters abound with gross misrepresentations, of which the above is a small specimen.

Those who oppose revelation are either Deists or Atheists. Deists believe that there is a God possessed of every possible perfection, who made and governs the universe; but they deny revelation. Atheists reject the scriptures, and deny *the being of a God.* It is only with Deists that Christians can have any dispute concerning the scriptures; for Atheists, by denying that there is a God, preclude the possibility

fibility of a revelation. The only dispute we can have with Atheists respects the *Being of a God*, and they must be converts to deism before we can argue with them about religion. Now the author of these Letters is an avowed atheist; as is evident from page 12, 13, and other passages in his publication. It was very absurd in Dr Francis to proceed any further against revelation than the twelfth page of his book. "But, says he, let me ask your Lordship what you couclude against one who, *like myself, is not a Deist?*" I will answer for his Lordship, that we cannot reason with him concerning the existence of a revelation from God till he *becomes a Deist*, and confesses the being of an intelligent Creator of all things. In page 15, the same ridiculous sophistry is employed to disprove that there is a God, which it has been shewn deists argue against revelation. Deists are our auxiliaries in the controversy with atheists, while atheists concur with us in urging home upon the deists several arguments in favour of revelation.

Dr Francis confesseth, page 12. "The remainder of your first letter contains observations to which I perfectly accede. Your conclusion against Thomas  
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"Paine is perfectly fair," &c. Page 15.  
 "I acknowledge with the Doctor, that  
 "many deists admit a Being as incon-  
 "ceivable as any religious mystery;  
 "therefore it may seem ridiculous in  
 "them to stop their credulity," &c.

Dr Francis lays it down as a funda-  
 mental principle, which he calls an axiom  
 of philosophers, page 23, "that no human  
 "testimony can establish the credibility  
 "of miracles."

If men were certain that there is no  
 God, no superior power to control the  
 ordinary course of nature, then this axiom  
 might be admitted; but to those who be-  
 lieve in God, miracles are undoubtedly the  
 subject of human testimony, because they  
 are possible facts. The dispute concern-  
 ing them, as a subject of human testimo-  
 ny refers to a matter of fact, which  
 is the subject of experience. Every man  
 must judge for himself, whether the con-  
 curring testimony of many, who have no  
 temptation to deceive, who were in a si-  
 tuation that from the nature of the fact  
 they witnessed, it was impossible to im-  
 pose upon them, would not perfectly sa-  
 tisfy his mind of the truth of their testi-  
 mony, tho' they narrate a miraculous e-  
 vent. Hitherto mankind in all ages have

admitted the credibility of miraculous facts on human testimony. No wonder tho' Atheists are anxious to prevent the belief of miracles; for if it can be proved that there ever was a miracle in the universe, their system is eternally ruined. A miracle is an unanswerable proof of the existence and agency of an invisible Being superior to the powers of nature, and to all created existences.

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## P A R T II.

## THE DIVINE COMMISSION OF MOSES.

## C H A P. I.

*Authenticity and purity of the Pentateuch.*

**A**UTHORS, who decide not only without any proof, but in opposition to strong evidence, deny that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch. Mr Francis in his Letters to the bishop of Landaff affirms, that "the best informed old fathers of the church believed that the Jewish books had been absolutely lost during the captivity, and that Esdras had written them from inspiration."

*Some* of the ancient fathers mention this opinion, but they had no other foundation for that notion than an absurd story in the second apocryphal book of Esdras, which is so very ridiculous that the credulous Romanists rejected it from their canon. Even this story supposes the books, after the captivity, to be the same with those in use before they were in Babylon. The

following remarks are deemed a sufficient answer, to such objections against the authenticity of the Pentateuch, as deserve any notice.

1st. The scriptures represent a revelation from God as gradually communicated to mankind; and the writings of Moses suppose that other prophets would succeed him in the Jewish church. Tho' no prophet altered the writings of his predecessors, yet he sometimes added to them such well known facts as were useful in rendering the historical part more complete; or wrote on the margin explanatory notes, which afterwards were engrossed into the book; of these there are several instances in the Pentateuch.

2d. Ezra, who was well acquainted with the sacred writings of his countrymen, collected and arranged them into one volume; he also corrected the errors which had crept into some of the parts through the carelessness or ignorance of transcribers, and added to the parts of this corrected edition whatever facts or notes were thought necessary for illustrating and perfecting the whole book. It is also affirmed, upon good authority, that Ezra changed the obsolete names of some places, and wrote out a corrected copy

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of the whole in the Chaldee character †. These alterations elucidate the subject of revelation, without injuring any of the original parts; they were thought to be approved also by the prophet Malachi, the last on record in the Jewish church.

SECT. I. *The only account of the origin and establishment of Judaism is in the Pentateuch.*

THE keenest advocates for infidelity confess that the most *ancient writers* mention the slavery of the Jews in Egypt, and their expulsion out of that country, and that *one Moses* led them out into the wilderness, and gave them a religion. Diodorus Siculus says, that the God of Moses was Jau, or Jahouh, which Dr Francis affirms "is the true pronunciation of Jeho-  
" vah;" see his Letters to Bishop Watson, page 25. That author adds, that " Strabo in his Geography informs us  
" that Moses, who was an Egyptian priest,  
" taught his followers to worship the God  
" Jahouh, without representing him by  
" emblems."

It is equally certain that Moses recorded

† See Prideaux, Calmet's Dictionary, and Dissertation on Ezra, &c.

ed in a book, which he committed to the care and perusal of the Jews, an account of their religion and civil policy. These are facts established by the unanimous testimony of the Jews in all ages, and by the declaration of heathen historians. We have not better evidences that Mahomet is the founder of Mahometanism, and that he delivered to his followers in writing the doctrines and laws of his religion; than that Moses is the founder of Judaism, and delivered to his followers, in writing, the institutions of the Mosaic system.

The Jews are a singular people, and their religion is very remarkable. Heavens charged them with credulity and bigotry from the earliest period of their history, on account of that obstinacy with which they adhered to all the institutions of their religion as delivered to them by Moses. Tho' for many ages they have been scattered among others nations, yet they have neither incorporated with them, nor adopted their principles. Whether they dwell among the Mahometans, the Pagans, the Papists, or the Protestants, in Asia, Africa, America, or Europe; they all profess the same religion, observe the same rites, and revere the *same sacred books*.

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When did their fathers first adopt this singular religion? how were they persuaded to submit to it? by what means was a religion, very different from that which was professed by other nations, so deeply established in the hearts of the people as to be preserved by their posterity to this very day?

The only satisfactory solution of these questions which can be given is found in the five books of Moses; and these books so perfectly agree with the institutions of Judaism, and the civil policy of the Israelites, that they contain *self-evident marks* of being the very writings which the founder of that religion committed to his followers for the preservation of its purity.

SECT. II. *The authenticity of the Pentateuch established by the Jewish records.*

JOSEPHUS, in his book against Apion, testifies that the Jews always believed the first five books in their scriptures to belong to *Moses*, and to be of divine authority.

We are certain that, when the authors of the New Testament wrote, it was the belief of the Jews that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch. This was the belief

belief of the Jews during their captivity in Babylon, and in the days of their kings and judges; and no period can be shewn, from the days of Moses to the present hour, in which this was not their opinion. This fact, that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch, does not rest on oral tradition. The *public records* of the Israelites trace their religion and form of government to Moses as their founder, and the Pentateuch to him as its author. In that book their legislator recorded the institutions of Judaism, and the form and laws of their commonwealth; now the records and other writings of that people uniformly refer to the Pentateuch, which is called *the Law*, or *Book of Moses*. Both Daniel and Ezra mention what is written in the *Law of Moses* the man of God. King David charged Solomon to keep the statutes, and the commandments, and the judgments, and the testimonies, as they are written in the *Law of Moses*. Joshua built an altar unto the Lord, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses; and all who have any acquaintance with the Jewish writings know, that the Law, or Book of the Law of Moses, means the Pentateuch.

It is certain that the Jews kept public records

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records of great importance to all the nation. The nature of their religion, and form of government, rendered this absolutely necessary. The distinction of their tribes and families, with their several privileges, as stated in the Pentateuch, the genealogies of their priests, which behoved to be examined when they were admitted into the sacred office, the restoration of the forfeited inheritances to the legal heirs of the original possessors, in the year of jubilee, rendered it absolutely necessary to keep, with the utmost care, the best authenticated records that ever were preserved by any nation. Every Jew could trace up his ancestors to those who were present with Moses when the Law was delivered from Sinai; and from these public records, traced through different families, did Matthew and Luke extract their genealogies. Now all these records were ultimately connected with the original writings of their Legillator. These they uniformly consulted in the affairs of both church and state, and the parts of their records which have been selected as the most essential, and therefore engrossed into their sacred writings, establish in the fullest manner the authenticity of the Pentateuch. The universal consent of all antiquity

antiquity also agrees with these records. We have not so full and authentic evidence that Mahomet is the author of the Alcoran, Virgil of the *Æneid*, or Homer of the *Iliad*, as we have that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch.

In our Saviour's days neither Jew nor Gentile entertained the least doubt of its authenticity. Long before his birth, about two thousand years ago, when the five books of Moses, with other parts of the Jewish sacred writings, were translated into Greek, and committed to the care of the Gentiles, the authenticity of this part of the scriptures was universally acknowledged. On this subject could any rational man desire fuller satisfaction?

SECT. III. *The religion of the Jews a sufficient security against forgery.*

THERE never was a publication kept with more care, or transmitted to posterity with greater fidelity than the writings which the Jews received from Moses. This Book was not like that which the Romans received from the Sibyls, and which was carefully concealed from the vulgar. The Pentateuch was diligently taught to the whole nation, it was pub-

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Such was the veneration which the Jews, in all ages, had for the writings of Moses, that a society was formed, whose principal employment was to write out correct copies, and preserve their purity. The sections, the sentences, the words, and the very letters, were all numbered. If any error had been committed in transcribing a copy, it was not allowed to go into general use.

Every Jew was obliged, from his infancy, to read and study the books of Moses, in order to be capable of observing the many rites and institutions of his religion. Besides the express law, to teach them diligently to their children, it was also an  
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essential part of their worship to read regularly a certain portion of them in public. This uniform and well known practice rendered it impossible to adulterate their sacred books, or forge writings in the name of Moses. Every Jew was perfectly acquainted from his infancy *with all the books* which were written by Moses; and if, in any period after his death, an attempt had been made to impose a forgery in his name on the people, it must have been detected whenever it appeared. If we suppose the whole, or any part of the Pentateuch to be a forgery, this would imply that the first time the forgery was read in public, all the people, who never heard it before, received it as a part of the writings of Moses, which their fathers had diligently taught them from their infancy, and which had been regularly read in their public worship ever since the days of Moses. This is too absurd to be admitted by any rational creature; especially if we consider the zeal of the Jews, and their great diligence, to preserve the purity of their sacred writings; add to this the universal belief of the Jews that their present and eternal happiness depended on reading and observing the institutions of Moses in that very form in which

which they were received from his hand.

On the third month after the Israelites passed through the red Sea, the Law was given, and a new religion established among them. This rendered it necessary to distribute copies among the people, as a mean of instruction, for enabling them to understand the many rites which they were obliged to observe.

As they were forty years in the wilderness, and had little else to do than learn and practise the Mosaic system, there is reason to believe that the principal families of every tribe would procure copies which would be highly esteemed, and transmitted from one generation to another, as a valuable and important trust. These copies were another security against any forgery for many ages after the death of Moses.

Different sects early sprung up in the Jewish church, and disputed with keenness about articles of religion. The Pentateuch was the common standard, to which they all appealed: the parties therefore watched over one another to prevent their opponents from altering these records to the injury of their own cause. This litigation excited the contending parties to study the Pentateuch, and examine an-

cient copies, in order to know if any alteration had been made to the advantage of their antagonists.

The inference from all these facts, that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch, and that it has been transmitted to future ages unadulterated, appears in controvertible.

SECT. IV. *The Jewish government a security against any forgery or alteration in the Pentateuch.*

JOSEPHUS, after mentioning the high respect which the Jews always had for their sacred books, says, "which in so long a tract of time no man has ventured to add any thing to them, or diminish or alter any part; for the Jews from their infancy are accustomed to call them divine institutions."

I have shown that the Jewish religion was so essentially connected with the Pentateuch that it was impossible to corrupt it, or forge books in the name of Moses, while Judaism existed in its original purity. The remark is equally applicable to the *civil government* of that nation.

The Pentateuch was the law of the land, and may be said to contain the *Charter* by which the people held their possessions.

flons. In it are recorded the terms on which they were permitted to possess their inheritances, the regulations which they were bound to observe, the laws which they were to obey, and the various punishments to be inflicted on transgressors.

When Joshua divided the conquered countries among the Jews, a copy of the Pentateuch, to every family who received a lot, was of similar use and importance, to the title-deeds of estates in modern Europe; and would therefore be transmitted from one generation to another with similar care. The affairs of government could not be carried on, nor judgment given in a court of judicature without consulting the writings of Moses.

The rule which he wrote for the king was applicable to every judge, and those who obtained authority in Israel; "And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life." Thus the essential connection of the civil government with the writings of Moses was a perfect security, against any corruption or forgery in the Pentateuch.

teuch. If the zeal of the Jews for the religious institutions of Moses, in some instances abated, their concern for their temporal interests supplied the defect.

As the keen disputes among religious sects preserved the purity of the *common standard*, so the jarring interests of the Jews in Canaan secured from corruption the *common charter*, in which were inserted their several privileges. The tribe of Levi, tho' very numerous, was maintained by the tithes of their brethren. The laws respecting the extent and manner of tithing are interwoven with the institutions of religion and history of its establishment in the Pentateuch. The interests of Levi were obviously opposite to those of the other tribes. The extension of tithing was good for the priests, but ill for the people, and no doubt the frequent subject of dispute.

This obliged both parties, for their own advantage, and that they might not be imposed upon, to be well acquainted with the laws of their country in the Pentateuch, and also to guard against alterations or forgeries which might prove detrimental to their temporal interests. To this I might add the wise precaution of Moses to prevent any forgery in his name,  
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or alteration of his writings in future ages. An attested copy was publicly deposited in the sacred ark, and the fact recorded in the copies which were distributed among the people; that in future ages posterity might possess a pure copy by which they could correct any mistake. About eight hundred years after the death of Moses, when the zeal of the Jews for their religion was much abated, several of its institutions neglected, and the Pentateuch regarded rather as the law of the land than a book of divine authority, the attested copy deposited by Moses in the ark was discovered. The perusal of this ancient writing renewed in the minds of the Jews a sense of that divine authority by which their religion had been established in the wilderness, and impressed the king and the people with a dread of the judgments to which they were exposed by neglecting the ordinances of the Lord; see Deut. xxxi. 24. and 1 Chron. xxxiv. Upon the whole it is absolutely certain, and is not denied by the Deists, that Moses led the Jews out of Egypt into the wilderness, that he established a new religion and form of government among them, and that he delivered to the people a written account of the institutions of their religion.

on and the laws of the kingdom. We have found that from the nature of that religion and civil government it was absolutely impossible, in any future period, to alter the writings of Moses, or forge books in his name without the knowledge and consent of all the people, and that this would have been detrimental to both their temporal and eternal concerns.

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## CHAP. II.

*Moses no impostor.*

AS Moses uniformly asserted that he had a divine commission, and that he received in a revelation from God the institutions and laws which he delivered to the Jews, either he was inspired, as he said, or he was a cunning impostor.

His situation and conduct as a leader, the opposition which he encountered, the laws and institutions which he established might all be urged as evidences in his favour; but I will state facts of greater weight.

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SECT. I. *The Pentateuch contains a true history of Moses' life.*

AS a historian who relates the transactions of his own life among the Egyptians and Hebrews, it was impossible for Moses to impose upon those people who received and believed the Pentateuch. In that book the institutions of Judaism and form of government are interwoven with an instructive account of the most remarkable events, known to all the people, which led to the establishment of their religion and civil policy.

His own public transactions, as their legislator and leader, were known to all the Jews. These he recorded from the time that the elders of Israel were all assembled to receive his message from God; as in Exod. iv. 29. till he concluded with blessing the people before his death. By publishing this history among the people who beheld the things which he relates, and on whom he urged the well known truth of the facts, as a motive to believe and obey the new religion which they had received, Moses has given posterity the most incontestible evidences of his veracity as an historian.

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It must be remembered that Moses met with much opposition; had he therefore prefaced his laws with a narration of such falsehoods as every Israelite could have detected, this would have effectually ruined his credit and authority, his enemies would have triumphed over him, and his institutions would have been rejected with contempt.

To know the truth of this history the Jews had only to open their eyes and look around them, or recollect what their eyes had seen and their ears heard.

Moses relates miracles which they beheld in Egypt, and which affected man and beast over all the country; he describes their journey through the red Sea, and the manner in which they saw the waters overwhelming Pharaoh and all his army.

The giving of the law from Sinai, and the awful visible tokens of God's presence there, as described by Moses, must have made a deep impression on the Jews. Moses often mentions a miraculous cloud which constantly attended the twelve tribes, and which was a pillar of fire to them in the night, and screened them in the day from the ardent rays of the sun; he relates too, that from this cloud God frequently

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frequently spoke to him with an audible voice in the hearing of them all; he also has given an account of the manna which came down from the clouds every day, except Sabbath, in such abundance that they all partook of it for forty years in the wilderness.

These and many such astonishing events related by Moses, were too memorable to be forgotten, too extraordinary and uncommon to be asserted by any man in his senses, if they had not been undoubted facts, and they were too public and visible to admit of a false representation. Those who opposed his authority, and scrutinized his conduct, possessed great power and influence among the people; to them in particular he related these facts, as a motive to submission and obedience. They were silenced, and all his writings received and perused with veneration by the people, on whom it was impossible to impose, if the narration had been false.

The various subjects of which Moses treats lay him open to detection if he had departed from truth; but no investigation of nature and of history, either in his own life, or since his death, has discovered a falsehood in the Pentateuch. Visible monuments

numents of several miraculous facts, mentioned in that book, remained in existence long after the decease of Moses.

Travellers, who visited the wilderness through which he led the Israelites, mention that a rock, standing where the waters were said to issue from the flinty stone to supply the people, has twelve holes in its sides about a foot wide, which have the appearance of being worn with water, but are now dry. The institutions of Moses were observed by the Jews in Palestine for upwards of fifteen hundred years, in the very manner that they are described in the Pentateuch. The sacred ark and tabernacle which were made by his direction, as described in that book, long remained among the Jews, together with the pot of manna and Aaron's rod which budded and brought forth fruit in one night. These were visible monuments of the truth of several parts of these writings. The well authenticated records of the Jews testify that the brazen serpent which for some time had been a standing miracle in the camp of Israel, was preserved for upwards of seven hundred years; and the attested copy of the Pentateuch, which Moses deposited in the ark, was taken out eight hundred years after his death,

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death, and read to the king. These facts are strong corroborating evidences of the veracity of Moses; but there are other facts of equal weight in confirming the truth of his history. Many of those traditions, which have been found in the most ancient nations in the world, evidently refer to the facts recorded in the book of Genesis. Tho' the truth be fancifully dressed up, in these traditions, yet the original fact may be discovered through the disguise. Grotius on the truth of the Christian religion, mentions instances in which the Egyptians, Indians, Phœnicians, Assyrians, Grecians, and other nations, entertained the same opinions, tho' somewhat disguised, which are recorded in the writings of Moses. Doctor Francis, Volney, and other propagators of infidelity, not only acknowledge this fact, but also quote the opinions of ancient heathens in order to prove that many things in the Pentateuch were borrowed from the theology of other nations.

It is unnecessary to refute an opinion which is so very absurd. The universality of the same opinions, among nations unacquainted with one another, and very dissimilar in other things, proves that they were derived from the same common

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source. The writings of Moses point out that source, and account for the extent of the same opinions among so many nations. From the beginning of Genesis to the end of the ninth chapter, the whole contents must have been known to the sons of Noah, who peopled the world. The creation, the original state of the first pair, the fall, the serpent, the longevity of the antediluvians, the flood, and the ark in which man and beast were preserved, are events too important and memorable to be soon forgotten.

If the book of Genesis be a true history, these things must have been known to the sons of Noah, and transmitted to the nations which sprung from them. Accordingly we find that the opinions which were so general among the ancient nations, are those which must have been known to that family, from which they all descended. This is a striking evidence of Moses' veracity; his history accounts for this universality of the same opinions, while the nations, who preserved them, thereby give their testimony to the truth of the Pentateuch. The intercourse which took place between the Jews and other nations, individuals who were carried captive in war, the dispersion of the ten tribes,

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tribes, the captivity of the whole nation, and the translation of their sacred books into Greek, are some of the means which communicated the knowledge of Judaism to the Gentiles. Zoroaster evidently extracted several of his opinions from the Jewish writings, and propagated them successfully among the Persians; yet Deists scruple not to affirm that the *Jews adopted his principles.*

SECT. II. *The miracles and predictions of Moses establish his divine commission.*

IN a former section it was shewn that miracles and prophecies are the most satisfactory evidences of a divine commission: very extraordinary evidences of this nature were produced by Moses both to the Egyptians and the Jews. When he went unto Pharaoh, to demand the liberation of the Israelites, he possessed no authority, no power, no human means for enforcing his demand.

These slaves were very profitable to the Egyptians, and it was not to be expected that they would easily be persuaded to set them free. The only mean, by which Moses could rationally expect success, was the power and authority of God. He un-

dertook this very difficult enterprise with great reluctance, and did not consent till he received repeated instances of that infinite Power, on which alone the accomplishment of his mission depended.

When he stood before Pharaoh, the message which he delivered was, " Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go," &c. The king very naturally asked for the *evidences* of his commission from God. They were produced and tried by the most learned and enlightened people in the world; and consisted of such predictions and miracles as clearly proved the communication of Moses with the *God of Nature*.

I shall mention a few of the many which Moses produced. When he spoke to Pharaoh in the name of God, the king dismissed him with this reply, " Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? " I know not the Lord." Moses is sent back with this reply, " Thus saith the Lord, In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord, the waters of the river shall be turned into blood;" and as a proof that the transformation is real, and not merely in appearance, " the fish in the river shall all die, the waters become fetid and altogether unfit for use."

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As nothing like this was ever seen before, no man would have devised such a prediction, and seriously pledged his credit and character on its accomplishment, if it had not been revealed to him by God. We are certain that God would not reveal these secrets to an impostor, to enable him to deceive mankind. Now this extraordinary event came to pass in the very time and manner which Moses foretold. To render this sign a clear proof of the Prophet's commission, it was produced by his instrumentality; for when Moses stretched out his hand upon the waters, and touched them with his rod, *they were instantly turned into blood*. The fish in the river died, the waters stank, and the people could not drink them. Many would then remember that they had stained those waters with the blood of the Hebrew infants, and now they could obtain nothing but blood to drink.

That the whole nation might sufficiently experience the accomplishment of the prophecy, and the reality of the miracle, the river continued in that state seven days; and the people were greatly distressed, for they could obtain no water to drink. The Jews experienced this awful judgment, for as yet God had not put

a division between them and the Egyptians. Moses had foretold that Pharoah would not permit them to leave Egypt till God inflicted on him awful judgments; they therefore beheld these marvellous events with deep attention, as a proof that God had sent him. To these judgments which they thus witnessed and experienced Moses had frequent occasion to appeal, as a mean of silencing those who murmured against him. The other judgments which Moses predicted, and the miracles which he performed, like this on the waters, were of such a nature as to preclude the possibility of imposition or deceit.

The same remark is applicable to the miracles which were wrought in the presence of the Israelites after they left the land of Egypt. The luminous cloud which accompanied them by night and day, for forty years, and the bread from heaven on which they lived all the time they were in the wilderness, were such clear, long continued and public tokens that God was with Moses, and approved of the Jews while they submitted to him as the Lord's servant, that it is unnecessary to add other evidences, tho' many might be produced.

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SECT. III. *The inspiration of Moses confirmed by the miracles which the Magicians performed.*

AS I have never seen a satisfactory explanation of the miracles performed by the Magicians in Egypt, I will state a few observations which lead to the right understanding of this subject.

1. Moses recorded these transactions, between him and the magicians, for the use of the Jews who were perfectly acquainted with every circumstance; his narration is therefore very concise and obscure to us: many circumstances are omitted, as unnecessary to be mentioned to them, which would have been useful to posterity.

2. In Exod. vii. 8—12, the following circumstances are suggested. Moses was not to perform any miracle till Pharaoh required it as a sign that God had sent him; "*When Pharaoh shall speak unto you saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, take thy rod,*" &c. The sign being asked, Moses declared what he would do, and "then Pharaoh called the wise men and the forcerers," for the express purpose of examining

examining the miracle which Moses was about to perform. The men for whom Pharaoh sent were the most learned in Egypt, and consequently the fittest to investigate the miracles which Moses performed. They are in a great mistake who think that the magicians, in order to discredit the miracle performed by Moses, attempted by magical arts to do the same thing. When it is said "The magicians *"also did in like manner with their incantments,"* ver. 11. it is immediately added, as an explanation of that sentence, ver. 12. *"for they cast down every man his rod and they became serpents."* The expression therefore *"They did in like manner with their incantments,"* means no more than this; they did with their rods what Moses did with his. This shows that no magical arts were tried.

This passage also shows, that they are in a great mistake who deny the reality of the miracles performed by the magicians. "They cast down every man his rod and *they became serpents."* The very same words are used to express the miracle performed by Moses, "Aaron cast down his *rod—and it became a serpent."* If we acknowledge the reality of the miracle in  
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the one case, we must admit it in the other.

3. The same power which transformed the rod of Moses into a serpent, also transformed the rods of the magicians. The force of this proof that Moses was sent by God, lay in this; the sign given was an operation which none but God himself could perform. To him all miracles are alike easy; to us one may appear greater than another. If we compare this miracle with the resurrection of a dead person whose body is still entire, we see a greater degree of power in the one than in the other. In both cases the Creator of all things infuseth life into dead matter; but the dead body has all the organs necessary for the reception of that life; it resembles a machine which had stopped and is again set agoing; whereas the dry rod must be completely changed, and new organs created before life could be infused into the parts. The transformation therefore of the magicians rods must have been performed by the power of God, of which it was a display not inferior to the resurrection of the dead.

4. When it pleaseth God to work miracles, we are certain he will never perform one to discredit or oppose another.

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The transformation therefore of the magicians rods into serpents, being the visible effects of divine power, could not be performed *in opposition to Moses*, nor tend to contradict his claim to inspiration : this would have been unworthy of God. We must therefore conclude that the miracles performed by the learned men in Egypt, *were visible signs wrought by God to testify that he sent Moses to Pharaoh.*

There is evidently a circumstance omitted by Moses in his account of these transactions, which must be supplied in order to understand them. What was the magicians design in imitating Moses with their rods? It is generally believed that they made these attempts to imitate Moses in order to prove that he had no commission from God, or that their design was to discredit his miracles : but this is mere conjecture, unsupported by the scriptures, and contrary to the conclusion of a former observation. These learned men were sent for, to oppose Moses, and to try the reality of his miracles ; but it is not said *for what purpose* they attempted to work miracles *themselves*. The circumstances recorded leads us into the knowledge of *that purpose*. The magicians were present, and witnessed the transformation of  
Aaron's

Aaron's rod, for he cast it down before Pharaoh, *and his servants*. The question to be solved by them was, Is this a real miracle, or are we imposed upon? To remove all suspicion Moses *desired them* to perform the miracle with their own hands. The rods were their own, they laid them down, and with their own eyes saw their transformation. This removed all suspicion; nothing could be fairer or more satisfactory than this experiment. Three different miracles, *for this purpose*, were those learned men required to perform with their own hands and their own rods; by this method they were certified that there was no deception in the miracles, which were wrought to prove that God had sent Moses to Pharaoh. In order to convince the magicians that there was *no natural connection* between the means which were employed and the miracles produced, but that they were effectuated *by the power of God*, Moses inverted the sign. He smote the dust and it was instantly turned into lice; when they did the same thing with their rods, in place of repeating the miracle, as in the former instances, the spot which they struck, alone remained without a living creature on its surface: all around was covered with vermin,

min, but not one was seen where they touched the ground with their rods. At the sight of this they could not contain their astonishment; "This, said they, is " the finger of God."

The reality of these miracles being *thus established*, the magicians acted no other part in the transactions which followed than mere spectators of what was done. Thus we find that the repetition of these miracles by the hands of the men who opposed Moses, and were not therefore in concert with him, established, in the most unexceptionable manner, his divine commission.

SECT. IV. *The divine commission of Moses deduced from the Passover and other institutions.*

THE first message which Moses was required to deliver unto Pharaoh is;  
 " Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son;  
 " —let my son go that he may serve me:  
 " and if thou refuse to let him go, be-  
 " hold I will slay thy son even *thy first*  
 " *born.*"

To render this prediction the more remarkable, it was afterwards added, that the first-born of both man and beast should  
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all die on one night, and that Pharaoh would dismiss the Israelites immediately when this judgment *should be* executed. The final success of Moses, his character as a prophet, and his authority among the Jews were suspended on the fulfilment of this prophecy. To all human penetration the Israelites were hopeless: In great wrath Pharaoh had said to their only advocate; "Get thee from me, take heed  
 " to thyself, see my face no more: for in  
 " that day thou seest my face thou shalt  
 " die. And Moses said I will see thy  
 " face no more." Moses went out from Pharaoh and prepared the people for departing immediately.

The eventful night arrives in which, according to the prediction of Moses, the awful judgment would be executed; then went forth the angel of death and slew the first-born of man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt. The Israelites were protected by the sprinkling of blood.

To perpetuate the remembrance of this event, and the deliverance of the Jews, which was its immediate consequence, Moses changed the beginning of their year to the month in which this happened, and instituted the feast of the *Passover*. To this was added the solemn consecration

One of the first-born of man and beast to  
 the Lord, with this remarkable charge;  
 “ And it shall be when thy children ask  
 “ thee in time to come, saying, What is  
 “ this? thou shalt say to them, By  
 “ strength of hand the Lord brought us  
 “ out of Egypt from the house of bond-  
 “ age; and it came to pass when Pharaoh  
 “ would hardly let us go, that the Lord  
 “ slew all the first-born in the land of  
 “ Egypt, both the first-born of man and  
 “ the first-born of beast, therefore I sa-  
 “ crifice to the Lord all that openeth the  
 “ matrix,” &c. Exod. xiii. 11.—16.

All those things have been religiously  
 observed ever since, and establish the  
 truth of the narration in the book of  
 Exodus. It is morally impossible that the  
 Passover and the law representing the  
 first-born could have been invented after  
 the death of Moses, and imputed unto him.  
 The nature and form of these rites ne-  
 cessarily suppose that they have been re-  
 gularly observed ever since the Jews were  
 rescued from bondage. If in any future  
 period they had been invented and pro-  
 posed to the people, they behoved to re-  
 ceive and observe these institutions, for  
 the first time, as if they had been estab-  
 lished by Moses, and regularly observed e-

ver since, by their ancestors. According to this supposition, when these rites were invented the whole nation must have received them, and professed to believe what they knew to be a gross falsehood, and then conspired to impose on their children by saying to them, that Moses instituted these rites to commemorate their deliverance from the destroying angel and from bondage; as in Exod. xiii. What can be more absurd than this supposition? would a whole nation agree solemnly to profess their belief of a notorious falsehood, and to teach their children a tissue of lies, for no other purpose than to subject themselves and their offspring to a heavy burden? The unsurmountable difficulties, which were formerly mentioned, against foisting forgery into the Pentateuch, prevented the invention of these rites after the days of Moses; for they could not be perpetuated till inserted there.

In the records of the Jews, the regular observation of these rites can be traced up to the original institution by their Legislator. These evidences, and others that might be mentioned, lead to this conclusion; The passover and the law for consecrating the first-born must have been instituted by Moses, to commemorate the

deliverance of the Jews from bondage, and their first-born from the sword of the destroying angel. This therefore proves the fact, that this miracle was actually performed, and the prediction accomplished, which established the divine commission of Moses in the fullest manner.

That judgment upon the Egyptians was also an awful moral lesson to them and to the other nations of the world: The Egyptians had murdered the male infants of their oppressed servants, to prevent the children from revenging upon them the injuries which their fathers had suffered; and God punished these murderers by slaying all their first-born in one night.

In the same manner might the song, recorded, *Exod. xv.* be traced up to the day in which it was first sung by all the congregation of Israel, as a testimony, from the many thousands who passed through the red Sea, of the truth of the foregoing chapter, *Exod. xiv.* And this itself is a sufficient testimony of the divine commission of Moses, and truth of the Pentateuch.

SECT.

SECT. V. *The credibility of the miracles mentioned in the Pentateuch.*

THE greater and more varied those miracles are which Moses performed, the stronger are the evidences of his inspiration. By a strange perversion of reason, the propagators of infidelity maintain, that Moses must have been an impostor, because he pretended to perform extraordinary miracles. Their argument is not, that they are *impossible*, but that they are *incredible*, and therefore Moses must have been a lying prophet. Dr Francis says, " that it is an axiom of philosophers, that " no human testimony can establish the " credibility of miracles." I appeal to a matter of fact, to experience; have not mankind in all ages believed the reality of miracles upon human testimony? In this they are rather too credulous. What is it then which prepares the minds of plain honest men to believe the reality of miracles, when sufficiently attested? is it mere ignorance? No, I aver that it is *experience and reflection*. Mankind daily behold the operations of the same divine power, in the ordinary productions of nature, which is necessary to work a miracle,

race. Experience in the one leads them by analogy to credit the other.

The husbandman commits his inert seeds to the cold dead earth, and that lifeless matter, by means of air, sun-shine, and rain, changes, and changes again these seeds, till there is formed a number of the same kind out of one. He knows that all the human race could not perform that operation, which he sees executed by the dead clods of the valley. This convinces the honest husbandman that an invisible power, far superior to the boasted talents of philosophers, is exerted upon the earth to make it productive: common sense leads him to infer, "It is God who makes corn and grass to grow for man and beast;" and why may not that power which makes the fields produce corn for the food of man, also cause the clouds send down manna to support him? He plants his vine and sees it extract from the soil an excellent juice, and form clusters of grapes in which it is ripened: who taught the vine to perform this wonderful operation? The voice of reason within man answers, an invisible power greatly superior to man in wisdom and capacity: and why may not that power transform water into blood, is the rational question  
which

which an honest man would put to an unbelieving philosopher?

The formation of the lamb in the womb of its mother is no less wonderful to the simple shepherd, than the transformation of Moses' rod into a serpent. In the formation of its fine members, so wisely contrived and fitted for the purposes of life, the mother was intirely passive, and ignorant of the operations that were carried on, by some intelligent and efficacious power. That power, says the philosopher to the shepherd, is *nature*, which forms the foetus and perfects its parts; but nature could not form a serpent out of Aaron's rod, or make it bud and bring forth fruit in one night; this is contrary to the established laws of nature. The shepherd will reasonably conclude that *nature* must be a very wise and powerful being, who contrived those wonderful laws, and compels heaven and earth constantly to obey them. If wise and beneficial laws are enacted and established by rational beings, we conclude, that wise and benevolent men, possessed of authority, had devised them, and enforced obedience; much more must he be a wise, benevolent and powerful being who devised the laws of nature, and makes the inert earth and  
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bodies of animals to execute them so perfectly. To a mind which thus reflects upon the objects of sense, it is not at all incredible that this powerful being should at times cause a rational creature perform such operations as are ascribed to Moses.

If an Atheist laughs at a simple plain man for believing that an intelligent powerful being is the efficient cause of innumerable operations, for which no rational being can otherwise account; he pities the perversion of the Atheist's reason, who sees these operations without believing the existence of an adequate cause to produce them.

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## P A R T III.

THE DIVINE COMMISSION OF OUR LORD  
JESUS CHRIST.

**T**HAT the founder of Christianity is Jesus Christ, who lived in Judea when Tiberius was emperor of Rome, is a fact established by the testimony of Jews, Christians and heathens. Tho' he did not write any thing concerning himself, or his religion, yet we have four different histories of his life, two of them written by his disciples, Matthew and John, who saw and heard the things which they relate; the other two were written by historians who were very intimate with the disciples, and therefore received information from his constant attendants.

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 C H A P. I.

*The four Gospels are true Histories of our  
Lord Jesus Christ.*

SECT.

SECT. I. *The four Gospels no forgery.*

THE evidences that the four Gospels were written by the four Evangelists to whom they are severally ascribed, are so full and satisfactory that no person acquainted with the subject can doubt the fact. The primitive Christians had sufficient means of knowing the authors of these books, and the subject was too important to be implicitly admitted without certainty.

Tho' it was some time before Christians agreed to admit as canonical, some other books, yet these four were received by all the churches, whenever they were published. Within twenty years after Christ's ascension there were churches formed in almost all the principal cities of the Roman empire, and in all these churches were the four Gospels regularly read, ever after they were published. During the first centuries of Christianity, when the disciples of Jesus Christ were most cruelly persecuted, these books were their constant companions, the cause of their constancy, and the source of their consolation.

To call them a forgery palmed on the world

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world by interested priests, as some men have done, is an assertion so contrary to clear historical evidence, that it hardly deserves notice.

Eusebius, the famous bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine, informs us that the apostle John examined and approved the three gospels, and then wrote his own as a supplement to them.

About fifty years after John's death Justin Martyr wrote an apology for the Christians to the emperor Antoninus, in which he quotes passages out of all the four Gospels, as books known and admitted to be authentic by all parties. The apostle John, who would prevent forgeries from being admitted by the church during his lifetime, lived to the end of the first century. Polycarp, whom John instructed, and who was also acquainted with other disciples, lived till the year one hundred and sixty-seven; during his ministry the four gospels could not be adulterated.

Eusebius declares, that many Christians, who were instructed by the apostles, travelled with attested copies of the gospels, taken from the original, and published the truth which they relate throughout all the Roman empire. Copies faithfully transcribed from the manuscripts of the

the authors were multiplied in the days of the apostles. Tertullian affirms that there were original copies of these books extant in his time. Julian, that learned and keen enemy of Christianity, confesses that the four gospels were written by the authors, to whom they are ascribed. Jews and heathens, as well as Christians, acknowledged their authenticity, and never attempted to contradict the facts which they record. Correct translations of these books were soon made into a great many different languages, and multiplied among both Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers; and as they were very interesting, all parties watched over one another, to prevent forgeries, which might do an injury to their own cause.

The reasoning formerly employed in this work, to prove the impossibility of foisting forgeries into the five books of Moses, applies also to this subject. Of this fact therefore we are certain, that the four Gospels were written and published by the four Evangelists soon after our Lord's ascension, and have been transmitted to us without any material alteration.

The zeal of the Christians, and the disputes among themselves; the jealousy of both

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both Jews and heathens who opposed the gospel, to prevent too favourable an account of its author from spreading, and the multiplication of pure copies which were dispersed over all the Roman empire, with faithful translations into different languages, were a sufficient security from any corruption of the original history.

SECT. II. *Situation and character of the four Evangelists.*

inhabitant in Jerusalem, and that the disciples often resorted to his house. Tho' he was not an apostle, yet he received his information from the unanimous testimony of Christ's disciples. Accompanying Peter into Italy, he is said to have preached the gospel for some time at Rome. Before he left the Christians whom he had converted there, he wrote his gospel for their use, and then went into Egypt. The primitive fathers inform us that the apostle Peter revised Mark's gospel, and attested his veracity.

Luke was a native of Antioch, and an intimate companion of the apostle Paul. This Evangelist informs us that he received the materials of his history from those who were witnesses of the facts which he relates; these were the disciples with whom he was particularly acquainted.

John was a native of Bethsaida in Galilee, and a disciple for whom his Master had a tender friendship, hence called the *beloved disciple*. Matthew and John relate the facts which they had seen and heard, and which evidently had made a strong impression on their minds. Mark and Luke relate the principal facts which they had often heard from the disciples, and therefore had the best information.

The

The character and situation of these four authors add great weight to their testimony. They gave the world a most satisfactory evidence that they wrote from the heart, and that they related well known facts, which they fully believed: for they voluntarily forsook their country, their families and dearest friends, to undergo the most difficult and dangerous toils. As a proof of their sincerity they voluntarily submitted to a dreadful persecution, and were exposed to a cruel death. The four Evangelists, and the other disciples, who publicly preached the same things, which they wrote, could not be deceived, for they had the best possible information; neither had they any motive to deceive others. Jesus Christ was gone, and they had nothing to expect from him in this world by adhering to that cause. He did not deceive them with false promises, for they were warned by their Master to expect persecution, ignominy and death in this world, if they continued his disciples. According to their own principles, either as Jews or Christians, they brought upon themselves eternal misery if they knowingly persevered in propagating falsehoods. With immorality they were never charged by their

keenest enemies. Tho' plain, unlearned and simple men, yet they were no enthusiasts. In their trials they discovered capacity and cool resolution, but no meanness unworthy of their station.

The testimony therefore of these men, under such circumstances, must have great weight when impartially examined.

### SECT. III. *The agreement of these witnesses.*

THE perfect agreement of so many witnesses in their testimony, which was *voluntarily given*, under such circumstances as have been mentioned, establishes, in the most satisfactory manner, the truth of those facts which they attested.

The enemies of Christianity grant that the four Evangelists did not write in *concert*. The four gospels, therefore, contain the written testimony of four different men, given with great candour and simplicity, on different occasions, and in different places; and they perfectly agree with one another in all the *principal facts*. I am not concerned about some apparent differences, in trivial things; for these are easily reconciled to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced mind. The omission of some circumstance in one is frequently

ly supplied by another. The epistles which were written by other authors frequently mention, or refer to facts related in the gospels, in a manner which perfectly agrees with them all. This concurring testimony strengthens the evidence.

Of the original witnesses, who attest the facts recorded in the four Gospels, we have a considerable number. Besides the apostles, there were seventy disciples, whom Christ employed to preach the gospel, and who were frequently with him: these witnessed his miracles and heard his sermons. In that meeting of the disciples after their Master's ascension, when they made choice of another witness, in the place of Judas, there were an hundred and twenty present; Act. i. 15. Paul declares that there were five hundred disciples together, once when Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection.

Before the gospels were published many of these witnesses went into all the different provinces of the Roman empire, and formed churches in almost every city. To the people in these cities they related what they saw, heard and knew of Jesus Christ, who was crucified at Jerusalem; and those who believed their testimony

became members of these churches. What is the reason that *in all these churches* the four gospels were cordially received and approved when ever they obtained copies? The fact is undeniable, and the only reason which can be given is ; these gospels perfectly agreed with and confirmed what their teachers had related to them concerning Jesus Christ.

This fact shews us that the concurring testimony of the four Evangelists not only agree with that of the other apostles, but also with the uniform declaration of all those, who had any acquaintance with our Lord Jesus Christ.

These numerous witnesses were separated from one another: In different countries they were imprisoned, examined, tortured and executed; but in all their sufferings they neither contradicted one another, nor varied in that testimony *which they sealed with their blood.*

This agreement of so many witnesses under such severe trials renders the truth of their testimony, as recorded in the gospels, perfectly certain. It is incredible that so many men would voluntarily submit to such dreadful sufferings to maintain an unprofitable falsehood, and it is impossible that they could have avoided

contra-

contradicting one another if the subject of their testimony had not been well known truths.

SECT. IV. *The impossibility of propagating falsehoods concerning Jesus Christ.*

THE gospels are a history of no obscure person. Our Lord was a subject of universal curiosity: he preached and wrought miracles in the presence of thousands, and was frequently attended by a great number of all ranks and characters. When the high priest interrogated him concerning the number of his disciples and his doctrine, he answered; "I spake *openly to the world*: I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whether the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing." By both Jews and Gentiles his character and conduct were severely scrutinized, and after a very remarkable life he was publicly crucified, during a solemn festival, when the Jews were assembled at Jerusalem.

While the principal facts, which are related in the gospels, were fresh in the memories of their countrymen, the four Evangelists published an account of our Saviour's

Saviour's life and death. In relating his miraculous operations they mention the time, the place, the persons concerned, and the names of those whom he cured or raised from the dead. They delivered their histories to the people among whom Jesus Christ lived, while that generation was still alive, who beheld the scenes which they had described. Under these circumstances it was impossible for the Evangelists or the disciples to impose upon the Jews. According to these histories the Jews, from the worst of principles, had murdered a great and innocent personage at Jerusalem.

The enemies of Christ and his disciples were sufficiently able and willing to detect falsehoods if there had been any in these publications; their credit was at stake, and for their own vindication it was incumbent on those, who put him to death, and persecuted his disciples, to contradict their testimony, if any part of it had been false: but this was never attempted.

In all the controversies between the first Christians and the Jews, the facts mentioned in the four gospels were acknowledged on both sides, and the keenest of our Saviour's enemies never denied the

the truth of those miracles, which he is said to have performed: these facts were frequently mentioned and acknowledged by the opposers of Christianity, while it was in their power to detect the falsehood, if the Evangelists had misrepresented any circumstance.

We have therefore the testimony of our Saviour's enemies, yea of his murderers, concurring with that of his friends in attesting the truth of the four gospels. At the time and place in which they were published it was impossible to impose on the Jews by a false account of Jesus Christ's public actions. The Evangelists put it in the power of his murderers to prove their want of veracity if in any instance they had deviated from the truth; but this was never attempted, which is a clear proof that the enemies of Christianity found nothing in these gospels either false or uncertain.

The same remarks are applicable to the acts of the Apostles, which like the gospels were published in the place and among the people where they were transacted, and attested by those who opposed Christianity; "What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest

" nifest to all them that dwell in Jerusa-  
 " lem, and we cannot deny it." Act. iv.

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## CHAP. II.

*The divine commission of our Lord Jesus  
 Christ.*

HAVING shewn the undoubted truth of the four Gospels, I shall now prove our Saviour's divine commission from these well attested records. Jesus Christ used to call God his Father, and uniformly declared that he was sent by him into this world, and that he spoke in his name. " I have not spoken of myself," said he to his hearers, " but the Father who sent me he gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak," &c. From this and many such declarations it is evident that either Jesus Christ received a divine commission, and spoke to men from God, or he was a cunning impostor, and deceived the world. That he was not an impostor, but had a divine commission, I hope to establish in the following sections.

SECT.

SECT. I. *The character of Jesus Christ not that of an impostor.*

THE bright excellencies which shone forth, without the least affectation, through the whole of our Saviour's conduct, exhibit a character the most venerable and lovely. When accused by his bitterest enemies, on account of his doctrine, he challenged them to produce one instance of guile in his whole life. Can such a character be suspected of deliberate villany and deceit? what end could he propose in going about continually doing good and submitting to toils, persecution and death, if he had been an impostor? Worldly rewards he openly renounced, *and* he voluntarily lived in poverty, declaring his kingdom *is* not of this world.

If he had been an impostor, he certainly would have conducted himself in that manner which was most likely to ensure success: yet he knowingly and deliberately did the very reverse. His doctrine, manner of life, and whole conduct were such as brought upon him a keen and expected opposition.

We know for certain that the Jews looked for a great personage, at that time,

to appear among them; they believed he would come in great temporal glory, and erect in Judea an earthly kingdom. Had Jesus Christ intended to impose on the people, he could have availed himself of the general expectation, and assumed the character which suited their belief: in place of employing these prejudices to promote any scheme of his own, he laboured to subdue them.

From the beginning of his public appearance, he told them that his kingdom is not of this world; and tho' the people endeavoured to force him to assume royalty, he retired from their importunity and retained his poverty. To a most certain and violent persecution he submitted, rather than avail himself of the advantages which were offered him. Is it rational to suppose that this is the character and conduct of an intelligent impostor? is it not rather an early and satisfactory pledge of sincerity?

SECT. II. *The Prophecies fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

WHAT was the cause of this general expectation, not only among the Jews, but also among the Gentiles, "that a  
" Great

" Great Personage, at that time, would  
 " appear in the land of Palestine?" was it  
 not the many prophecies in the Old Test-  
 ament, in which he is described, and  
 which were known to other nations?

The patriarch Jacob foretold that the  
 Jewish government would not be subvert-  
 ed till after Shiloh should come and the  
 people be gathered to him, by embracing  
 his religion. The tribe and family from  
 which he was to descend, the very time  
 and place of his birth, were so distinctly  
 named by the prophets, hundreds of years  
 before he was born, that the Jews knew  
 both when and where to expect him. In  
 Deut. xviii. Moses relates how God pro-  
 mised to raise up *another* prophet like to  
 himself. Either Ezra, when he collect-  
 ed the books of the Old Testament into  
 one volume, or the last prophet who ap-  
 peared in the Jewish church, was directed  
 to write in the end of the Pentateuch,  
 " that there arose not a prophet since in  
 " Israel like unto Moses." This evident-  
 ly implies that the Jews were convinced,  
 that the Prophet of whom Moses spoke  
 was not yet come. It is mentioned as a  
 circumstance which distinguished Moses  
 from all other prophets, " God spoke with  
 " him face to face," and not in dark  
 I speeches

speeches by visions and dreams, Numb. xii. 6.

Other prophets received revelations only at particular times, and their knowledge of God's will was limited to particular subjects; but Moses received the gift of inspiration to such a degree, that at all times he had immediate access to know God's will concerning every thing in which a revelation was necessary. Other prophets received revelations darkly, by such dreams and visions as almost overwhelmed them; but Moses obtained the knowledge of the mind of God *in a different manner*, which did not in the least discompose him. In these things Jesus Christ was the only prophet that resembled Moses, as also in the many and extraordinary miracles which he performed. So conspicuous was this resemblance between the author of Christianity and the Jewish legislator, that when our Lord had fed five thousand miraculously on a desert mountain, as Moses fed the Israelites in the wilderness, the people, remembering the prediction, said, "This of a truth is that prophet who should come into the world."

Moses also foretold that this prophet would establish a new religion from God.

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" I will put my words in his mouth, and  
 " he shall speak unto them all that I shall  
 " command him," Deut. xviii. 18. In  
 ver. 19. is foretold the punishment of  
 those who would not hearken unto this  
 prophet; and more particularly the de-  
 struction of the unbelieving Jews by the  
 Romans, and their dispersion are distinct-  
 ly mentioned in Deut. xxviii.

As they who opposed Moses were all  
 destroyed within forty years after he de-  
 livered to them the law from Sinai, so in  
 forty years after Christ's ascension, the city,  
 temple and government of those who op-  
 posed him, were destroyed. These things  
 were clearly foretold by Moses, and to his  
 predictions Jesus referred when he fore-  
 told the time and manner in which they  
 would be accomplished: " These, said  
 " he, be the days of vengeance; that all  
 " thing, which are written may be ful-  
 " filled," Luke xxi. 22.

How exactly were the predictions of  
 Moses fulfilled in Jesus Christ! In no  
 history either sacred or profane, will you  
 find a person so like to Moses as Jesus  
 Christ, or so like to Jesus Christ as Moses.  
 With great propriety therefore did the a-  
 postles urge the accomplishment of this  
 prophecy (Deut. xviii. 18, 19.) in Jesus  
 Christ

Christ as a proof of his divine commission; see Acts iii. 22. and vii. 37.

Other prophets described the most remarkable actions of his life. They foretold the appearance of John the Baptist, who was to go before him as an eminent messenger, in the spirit of Elias. He was to proclaim his gospel chiefly in the land of Zebulon and Naphthali, and alleviate human misery by miraculous operations. From his healing hand the blind were to receive sight, the deaf hearing, the dumb speech, and the lame the use of their limbs. It was foretold that notwithstanding all these engaging virtues which he was to display, he should be despised and rejected by the people, and that he would bear great indignities with astonishing meekness and patience. With wonderful precision it was predicted that he would be betrayed by one of his disciples, and sold for thirty pieces of silver; that the rest would forsake him, and that he would be scourged, buffeted, spit upon; that his hands and feet would be pierced, but not a bone of him broken, and that his murderers would give him gall and vinegar to drink.

Many other circumstances of his death and burial are distinctly foretold; such as,  
that

that those who crucified him would cast lots for his garments, bury him in a rich man's sepulchre, and that he should not see corruption, but rise again the third day.

These prophecies, recorded long before his birth, were in the hands of those who murdered him, and kept secure from any alteration in his favour. Is it then possible that so many prophecies, so very circumstantial, attested by so many different persons, and running through all the sacred books of the Jews, could be so punctually fulfilled in one person, if the spirit of God had not revealed these things concerning him to the prophets? Now this great personage of whom they all spoke, is declared in these prophecies to be a saviour sent by God to bless mankind. The consideration of these predictions, so effectually convinced his bitterest enemies of his being the Messiah, that many who consented to his death, on comparing the prophecies with his history, and seeing their exact correspondence, believed his commission to be divine, and became sincere Christians.

The argument arising from these facts is unanswerable. A great variety of future events, inscrutable to human sagacity,

ty, all respecting one person; have been by different men, and at different times predicted. These events have all come to pass in the history of Jesus Christ; the predictions, therefore, must have been a revelation from God to them by whom they were delivered to the world; now our Lord frequently declared to the Jews that he is the subject of these prophecies, and their fulfilment in him justified his claim, by the highest authority, even that of God himself.

SECT. III. *Jesus Christ's claim to inspiration justified by miracles.*

JUDAISM and Christianity are the only religions which are established upon the footing of miracles. When a new religion is proposed to the world and contested, it is an awful trial to submit the question to the proof of miracles, which are to be examined by men of learning and discernment. Mahomet durst not rest the truth of his mission on this proof. In the Alcoran he mentions the objections of those who opposed him; they said if he did not work miracles they would not believe his doctrines. His answer was; "God giveth the power of working miracles"

“ racles, when and to whom he pleaseth,  
 “ and were he to work miracles ye would  
 “ not believe.” As a proof of this asser-  
 tion, he mentions Moses and Jesus who  
 both wrought miracles, and yet many did  
 not believe.

A careful inspection of the nature of  
 our Lord's miracles, and the manner in  
 which they were performed, may con-  
 vince every candid enquirer that they were  
 effectuated by the power of God.

How different are they from false mi-  
 racles, which generally consist in strange  
 and unaccountable appearances, that soon  
 vanish away. His miracles remained for  
 repeated investigation, and were of such  
 a nature as excludes the possibility of  
 fraud. It does not require learning, or  
 uncommon capacity to become a compe-  
 tent judge of their truth. Those who  
 witnessed them had occasion for no other  
 talents, to examine their reality, but the  
 right use of their senses, and an honest  
 heart. They saw our Saviour cure those  
 who were sore afflicted with the leprosy,  
 the palsy, and other obstinate diseases, by  
 saying to them, “ Be thou whole.” They  
 beheld him walking on the surface of a  
 raging sea, and saw the wind and the wa-  
 ves become calm, the moment he bade  
 them

them be still. These are miraculous facts in which the spectators could not be mistaken.

John tells us of a man who was blind from his birth, and became very generally known by sitting and begging on the public road. Our Saviour opened his eyes, and the people astonished at that great miracle, took the man to the Pharisees, who were our Lord's inveterate enemies. They sent for his parents who declared that their son was born blind: after examining the affair to the bottom, the truth of the miracle was established beyond contradiction. The reasoning of the man who was cured is unanswerable; "We know that God heareth not sinners—Since the world began was it ever heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind? If this man were not of God he could do nothing."

The death and burial of Lazarus, the time he lay in the grave, and the condition of his body, were known to many people of abilities and credit. These witnesses saw his grave opened, his body raised up to life, and his return in health to his astonished friends. The story of his resurrection was published by one who was present, while other witnesses were alive.

alive to attest the fact. This remark is equally applicable to the account of the man born blind, and other miraculous operations mentioned in the gospels.

Our Saviour clearly shows how these miracles prove his divine commission. "The works which I do in my Father's name they bear witness of me. If I do not the works which none but God can do, don't believe that I come from God; but if I do these works which none but God can do, tho' ye believe not my testimony of myself, believe God's testimony of me, who works in and by me these miracles."

SECT. IV. *The inspiration of Jesus proved by the accomplishment of his predictions.*

THE gift of prophecy is an infallible proof of a divine commission. Our Saviour gave satisfactory evidences of possessing this gift in a high degree. He foretold that Judas would betray him, that he would be thrice denied by Peter, notwithstanding of the promises and zeal of this disciple, that tho' the apostles abode with him when other followers left him, yet when he should be delivered up to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged, they would

would all be offended and would forsake him. Frequently he foretold the nature and manner of his own death, and promised to rise again on the third day : all these prophecies were punctually fulfilled.

The most remarkable of all our Lord's predictions respected the destruction of Jerusalem. Often in his discourses he spoke of that future event, tho' during his life, the Jews were at peace with the Romans, and appeared reconciled to their situation. I shall select a few of the circumstances which the author of Christianity foretold would happen, before, at, and after the destruction of Jerusalem.

1. He predicted that before the city was besieged, many false Christs and false prophets would come and mislead the people; that there would be famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and awful signs in the heavens, and that the gospel of his kingdom would be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then the end should come.

2. Jesus Christ also foretold that John should live to see this end come, and that it would be accomplished before the people of that generation to whom he preached were all gone.

3. He foretold several remarkable circumstances

circumstances which were to happen at the destruction of that city, such as, the preservation of all who should believe in him, and their escape from the city to the mountains, the progress of the Roman army like lightening from the east to the west, the manner in which that army would encompass the city with walls and trenches, the dreadful tribulation which the Jews would then suffer, such as was not since the beginning of the world.

4. He foretold that, when the city was taken, the Romans, contrary to their usual conduct, would raze the city and temple, and that the people would be led captive into all nations; in which condition they continue to this day.

Matthew published his gospel, in which these predictions are recorded, about thirty years before their accomplishment. The Jews who survived the destruction of their city, did not, in their disputes with the Christians, deny that Jesus Christ had foretold that unexpected event, in the manner related by the Evangelists.

Our Lord's predictions, respecting this subject, were so clear and particular, that after his ascension the disciples often spoke of that event as near and certain. Paul evidently alludes to it, in Acts xiii. 40,

41. This was *one reason* why the Jews were so enraged against the Christians, who blasphemed their holy place, as it was called. An instance of this we have in the martyrdom of Stephen: the principal accusation against him was, "he spoke blasphemous words against the holy place. For we heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place."

The reputation of our Saviour, as that true prophet who, as Moses foretold, would be raised up by God among the Jews; the credit of his disciples who believed him, and therefore spoke freely of these events which he had foretold, and the establishment of Christianity, *depended upon the accomplishment of these predictions.*

Fortunately the destruction of that city, in the manner which our Saviour foretold, is related by an historian of reputation, who was a witness of the event; and the truth of his narration has been fully established by the testimony of others.

Josephus had the advantage of much learning, possessed great abilities, had a fair character, was strongly attached to his unfortunate country, and beheld with deep attention and concern the scenes which he describes. His publication was approved by Vespasian, Titus and others who

who were perfectly acquainted with the subject: he was not a Christian, and when he candidly related the facts which he saw, he was ignorant that these were an accomplishment of our Saviour's prophecies. It is remarkable, that in some instances this historian relates facts almost in the very words which our Saviour used when he foretold them.

As several authors have shown the perfect agreement between our Saviour's predictions and the events to which they refer, I shall close this section by observing; the accomplishment of Jesus Christ's predictions clearly proves his intercourse with God, for without this it is impossible he could have foreseen these future events, and we know that God would not reveal the secrets of futurity to an impostor; *Therefore we are certain that Jesus Christ is sent by God his Father to speak to us in his name, as he said.*

#### SECT. V. *The resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

EVERY time our Saviour attempted to perform a miracle he risked his credit on its accomplishment, had he failed in one instance, that would have blasted his reputation. The same remark is applicable

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to

to his predictions ; had any one of them failed, that great character, which he had to support, would have received an indelible stain. Of all his predictions there is none on which he and his disciples laid a greater stress than that of his resurrection. So frequently had Jesus Christ in public foretold that he would rise again from the dead on the third day, that his murderers were acquainted with this prediction, and being in power, used every possible mean to prevent its accomplishment, or any imposition on the public in that affair.

His enemies left him not till they were certain that he was actually dead. Tho' his timid disciples were afraid to be seen, and had no hope of his return from the grave, yet a strong guard of soldiers surrounded his tomb. They had to watch over his grave only till the close of the third day, and then shew his dead body, to defeat his prediction.

The flight of the soldiers, their declaration to the high-priests and elders, the bribe which was given them to attest a ridiculous falsehood, the detection and publication by the apostles, of this deceitful transaction, between the soldiers and the priests, and the silence of the Jews on that subject, who never attempted

ed to refute the declaration of Christ's disciples, are strong evidences of the truth of his resurrection.

The conduct of the priests and elders toward the soldiers evidently implies a conviction that our Saviour was actually risen. They were now certain that he was not in the grave. If there had been any suspicion that his disciples were in possession of the dead body, these rulers, for their own credit, would instantly have imprisoned them, and used means to recover it, *which would have quashed the report of his resurrection for ever.* There can be no doubt therefore of their conviction that he was actually risen from the dead.

Tho' Jesus had appeared to the priests and rulers, it could have served no good purpose, as they were already convinced of the fact, but would not acknowledge it to the people. Supposing that his appearance to them, after his resurrection, would have changed their minds, and induced them publicly to confess the truth, the testimony of the priests and rulers would have been very suspicious to posterity; it would have been said that they had some political end to serve, that some state affair induced them. Besides this

would have weakened the testimony of the disciples; for the men who bribed the soldiers could secretly have bribed them; therefore the support of the priests and rulers would have rendered the declaration of the chosen witnesses suspicious. Their inveterate opposition to the cause, and violent persecution of the Christians, remove all suspicion of priestcraft and political design.

If the disciples had agreed to impose upon the world in this affair, common sense would have directed them, first to spread the report that our Lord was risen from the grave, and then employ an individual whom they could trust to personate him, and to appear before the multitude in such a manner and at such times, as would not endanger a discovery: as our Lord never appeared to the multitude after his resurrection, this removed all suspicion that the disciples had contrived a scheme of deceiving the people.

These considerations shew that our Saviour's appearance, after he rose from the dead, *only to a competent number of witnesses*, who were intimately acquainted with him before his decease, is a circumstance highly calculated to establish the truth of his resurrection to posterity.

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It is evident that tho' our Saviour foretold his resurrection, yet after his death the disciples did not expect it, and therefore were with difficulty convinced of the fact. As it was a subject of the highest importance to them and to the world, they obtained the fullest satisfaction of its truth. With his person they were intimately acquainted, and after his resurrection frequently saw and conversed with him, not separately, but together, not only by night, but also in the day, not at a distance, but in contact with him. They handled his body, frequently examined his person, renewed the private conversations which he had with them before his decease, and enjoyed an intimacy with him after his resurrection, which removed the possibility of being deceived.

The number of the witnesses was more than sufficient to establish any fact. When Paul published a defence of our Lord's resurrection, he declared to the world that Jesus appeared to five hundred witnesses at one time, and he appealed to a number of them who were then alive for the truth of his assertion. Could all those men agree voluntarily to maintain a vile falsehood, not only altogether unprofit-

able, but also such as brought upon them certain dishonour, poverty, persecution, and death?

According to their own principles, either as Jews or Christians, if this testimony, to which they adhered to the last moment of their life, had been false, they exposed themselves to eternal misery. These men, under such circumstances, could not have persevered in maintaining a false testimony, unless God had wrought a miracle in human nature, in order to enable impostors to deceive the world.

These witnesses were also separated from one another, many of them imprisoned, separately examined, severely tried, and cruelly tortured; yet they all agreed in every part of their testimony, they in no instance ever contradicted themselves or one another, and cheerfully sealed with their blood this truth, that they saw and conversed with Jesus after he was risen from the dead. Every person possessed of common sense must see the absolute impossibility of this agreement among the witnesses, if the subject of their testimony had been a falsehood.

The miracles, which the witnesses performed in confirmation of their declaration

ration concerning Jesus, are God's testimony to their veracity.

No subject was ever more public, more investigated, or better known than the transactions of the Apostles. Luke, an historian of great character, who witnessed many of the things which he relates, published *The Acts of the Apostles* among the people who saw the transactions. It would have blasted his character to have published falsehoods which must instantly be detected; it would have ruined the credit of the church to have received as facts, notorious falsehoods. Now the Acts of the Apostles were written by Luke, received by the church, and no falsehood was ever detected in that book by Jew or Gentile. The primitive fathers attest its truth and authenticity, and heathen authors record some of the important facts which are related by Luke.

In chap. ii. we are informed that the apostles, who were known to be unlearned fishermen, began to speak the several languages of those people, who at that time were assembled in Jerusalem from different countries. When the people were astonished at this undoubted proof of inspiration, the apostles thus addressed the multitude; "Ye men of Israel hear  
" these

“ these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man  
 “ approved of God among you, by mi-  
 “ racles and signs which God did by him  
 “ in the midst of you, *as ye yourselves al-*  
 “ *so know*—this Jesus hath God raised up  
 “ whereof *we all are witnesses.*”

To the gift of tongues, as a proof of inspiration, was added a number of undoubted miracles, in confirmation of this testimony concerning Jesus Christ, which are related in the Acts of the apostles, and were published among the people who witnessed them.

If all these considerations be candidly weighed, I maintain that no unprejudiced mind can hesitate in believing the truth of Christ's resurrection.

His resurrection establishes the truth of Christianity. From the dead he could not arise without the miraculous exertion of divine power. To this event he appealed before his death, as a decisive proof of his divine mission. In the faith of its accomplishment he yielded up his life on the cross, and by his resurrection God once more proclaimed his sonship, and commanded the world to obey our risen Saviour.

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SECT. VI. *The miracles of the Apostles and rapid progress of Christianity.*

I have shewn that the publication of the Acts of the Apostles by Luke among the people who witnessed the transactions which he relates, the notoriety of his subject, the approbation with which that history was received by all the churches, and the acknowledgement of its truth by both Jews and Gentiles, sufficiently evince its authenticity. There were many false accounts written of the apostles transactions, which were soon detected and rejected; but this canonical book, after the strictest investigation, was admitted by all parties as unexceptionable. It was shewn that the same evidences, which prove the authenticity and truth of the four gospels, extend also to the Acts of the apostles.

St. Austin observes, that this book was received with great edification, and read once a year in the assemblies of the faithful. Authors, who wrote soon after it was published, quote it as authentic, and containing facts which no party ever denied.

Irenæus who published in the second  
century

century observes, that he never read of either Jew or Gentile objecting against its truth; and the epistles of Paul, Peter, James and John, all agree with the book of Acts in the many facts which they occasionally mention, and which are also related in that History.

In the book of Acts, the truth of which is sufficiently confirmed, there are two remarkable facts mentioned; the performance of miracles by the apostles, and the rapid progress of Christianity.

The miracles which are related in the Acts of the Apostles were wrought by persons who gave other proofs of their mission, who insisted on the reasonableness of their doctrine, and requested their opponents to investigate the truth of their testimony, and the integrity of their whole conduct.

The men who performed these miracles were known to be illiterate, in a low condition, poor, without authority, and without friends to support them. In the account which was given to the world of these miracles, a few years after they were performed, the historian relates the public manner in which they were wrought, he mentions the time, the place, the occasion, the diseases which  
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were removed, the names of the persons healed, and thus gave mankind an opportunity of enquiring into the facts. These miracles were performed in the presence of learned opponents who had both ability and inclination to investigate their reality. The apostles performed them without the least appearance of pride, vanity or ostentation; they were not wrought for any worldly advantage, nor did the operators pretend to any superior capacity of their own; they appealed to God as to the truth of their testimony concerning Jesus Christ, and then performed the miracle in his name. These miracles were permanent, they admitted of re-examination, and were so various and numerous that the apostles' keenest enemies openly acknowledged their reality; "What shall we do to these men?" said their persecutors, for "that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it." Such miracles as these render the divine mission of the apostles indubitable, and confirm their testimony concerning Jesus Christ, in whose name they were performed.

The other remarkable event mentioned  
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in the Book of Acts is the rapid progress of Christianity, and its astonishing influence on both Jews and Gentiles.

Besides the evidences which we have of this fact in the New Testament, several heathen authors acknowledge, that in a few years after Christ's crucifixion, his religion spread through the whole Roman empire. This fact is so well established that I know of no person of credit by whom it was ever denied; nay it is most certain, that about twenty years after our Saviour's ascension Christian churches were formed in almost every city in Asia, Greece, Italy, and the coasts of Africa. Heathen historians affirm that in the Roman empire, the palace, the senate, the courts of judicature, the corporations and the very army were filled with Christians. These numerous converts renounced the ancient rites of their fathers, they forsook the pleasures, the honours and the riches, which they might have acquired by adhering to the religion of their country, and they submitted to disgrace, poverty, imprisonment, tortures and death by becoming Christians.

In all ages of the world mankind are strongly attached to the religion of their ancestors. The Jews in particular have  
always

always been remarkably bigotted to their system: but at that time when they inhabited their own country, met thrice a year at Jerusalem and sacrificed in the temple on mount Zion, they would have submitted to the most dreadful hardships rather than have renounced Judaism, yet among this very people did that new religion arise; and many thousands in Jerusalem itself, where their temple stood, and where Jesus was crucified, forsook the religion of their fathers and embraced the cross of Christ.

The change wrought on these converts, especially among the heathens, was astonishing. Their vices and superstition they renounced with their religion, and became enlightened in the knowledge of God and of their duty.

Tertullian, in his apology for the Christians, to the Emperor and senate, challenged them to name one real Christian who ever was condemned for theft, murder or any of those vices for which heathens were daily executed. The enemies of these early converts to Christianity never pretended to punish them for crimes; it was for their opinions and opposition to the religion of the state that they suffered.

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Pliny,

Pliny, in his letter to Trajan the emperor, who had required him to make particular enquiry concerning the Christians, gives the following account of them; "There is no fault to be found in them," said he, except their obstinate refusal to "sacrifice to the Gods." He adds; "at their religious meetings it is an essential part of their worship to oblige themselves by a solemn sacrament to abstain from murder, theft, adultery, and all manner of wickedness."

In proportion as Christianity spread, the human race was visibly reformed. Prejudices, apparently unconquerable, and vicious habits, deeply rooted and inveterate were completely subdued by the gospel of Christ. Christianity broke the fierceness of human nature, removed infirmities and disorders of long standing, and excited in men the most excellent and heroic dispositions.

It is not denied that, after the religion of Jesus Christ was established in the world, and these miraculous powers had ceased, by which it was at first propagated, the Christians soon degenerated, and a great number of ignorant and depraved men became members of the churches. But it is certain that the primitive

mitive Christians were refined, and their minds elevated and enlarged by the doctrines which they believed; old things with them were literally done away and all things became new. Under the severest trials of their virtue they maintained their exalted character, and those who were put to death for their testimony displayed a meekness, benevolence, and greatness of soul that confounded their murderers.

Was not this great and sudden change a visible display of the power of God? Its permanency, and wide extent proved its reality. Could this religion be propagated by impostors? by its fruits was it not known to be of God? Were not these undeniable and glorious consequences worthy of the miracles which God wrought to give efficacy to the gospel? and are not they, who labour to destroy the influence of religion on society, fighting against God, and dangerous enemies to the human race?

SECT. VII. *The propagation of Christianity is a proof of its divine authority.*

THO' the rapid and extensive progress of any religion is no conclusive proof of its divine origin, yet a particular religion

may be propagated by such inadequate means, under such unfavourable circumstances and violent opposition, as clearly manifests the immediate power of God in its progress and conquests.

The rapid vegetation of a tree and its early fruit may all be natural, but if a dry rod, long cut off from its parent root, like Aaron's, in one night blossom and bring forth fruit, then the miraculous power of God is visible in that production; and I hope to shew that the divine power was equally visible in the astonishing progress and influence of Christianity, when it was first preached by the apostles.

With timidity they fled and hid themselves when Jesus was betrayed, his death blasted all their expectations. In a few weeks after his decease the disciples came forth and boldly charged the Jews with the crime of basely murdering a great and innocent personage. From whence did they derive this courage? was there any alteration in the sentiments of the people to his favour? were not the murderers of their Master as violent as when they crucified him? were not the twelve warned to expect the same persecution from the Jews with that which Jesus suffered? Nothing therefore but conscious integrity and

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an assurance of their Lord and Master's protection could inspire the apostles *with this boldness*. But will *their boldness* account for the immediate conversion of so many thousands?

The Jews were never more attached to the religion of their fathers than in that age, and there was no visible cause in Christianity to induce them to give it the preference. They saw its author ignominiously crucified between two malefactors. The priests, the elders, the Pharisees, the Saducees, and all who had authority and influence among the people, exerted their learning and power to quash this new religion; and yet thousands renounced the religion of their ancestors, and with it their worldly interests, and embraced the cross of Christ: and they persevered in their adherence to that cause under the most rigorous sufferings. The fact itself is sufficiently established, and it cannot be accounted for without admitting the miraculous exertion of divine power, as related in the Acts of the Apostles. This is a phenomenon in human nature no less extraordinary than the production of almonds from Aaron's withered rod, in one night.

The conversion of Paul, as frequently

related by himself, is a proper example of that divine influence which produced so wonderful a change on many members of the Jewish church.

A more violent enemy to Christianity did not exist. In his fierce persecution of the saints he enjoyed honours and rewards from those in authority; while he believed that the suppression of this new religion would be an acceptable service unto God.

The means of his conversion, as recorded in the book of Acts, were evidently supernatural: a vision and voice from heaven at mid-day arrested him in his persecuting career, and deprived him of sight: for three days he remained in darkness and great horror. A disciple then came to him, and in the name of Jesus Christ restored his sight, and foretold his future destination. It is impossible that all this could happen by accident, or be conducted by human policy.

Paul was a man of great sagacity and intelligence, he deeply pondered this strange event: the result was, he renounced the religion of his ancestors, the company of the great, the friendship of those in power, and voluntarily associated with poor persecuted and despised fishermen.  
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He also submitted to the most awful trials, he undertook the most laborious operations, and exposed himself to dangers and death among strangers, without any visible motive of honour, advantage, or worldly pleasure. According to his own principles the propagation of known falsehoods exposed him to eternal misery; he therefore saith of himself and other propagators of Christianity, "If in this life *only* we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable."

To render it certain that this astonishing change was wrought in Paul by the power of God, and that he neither was deceived nor endeavoured to deceive others, he received the gift of working miracles, as is evident from his epistles. This eminent display of God's power in Paul's conversion, is an unquestionable proof of the divine authority of Christianity, since God called him for the express purpose of propagating it among the Gentiles.

The same power, tho' displayed in a different manner, was no less visible in the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles.

In conformity to the commission which the disciples received from Jesus Christ, after having preached the gospel in Jerusalem,

fa-lem, they next went to propagate Christianity among the heathens. These illiterate fishermen appeared among the Gentiles, and were without eloquence, power, riches or friends; they told the people a simple story of a detested Jew whom his countrymen crucified as a malefactor, and that they were his disciples, and had been banished for maintaining that God had raised him up from the dead.

Was it possible that the apostles could ever gain one proselyte by such means? They were strangers, come from a people whom the heathens despised; they frankly owned that all who embraced this new religion had no worldly advantages to expect by becoming Christians, and the subject of their testimony was highly calculated to excite contempt. A contest then arose the most unequal that can be imagined. On the one side were these poor, illiterate unbefriended strangers, who had poverty, ignominy, sufferings and death attending their cause; on the other side were the rulers of this world supporting an established religion, attended with honours and riches; in league with them were the learned, expert in disputation, and the priests, goaded with  
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the fear of losing their reputation, their importance and their maintenance. This powerful confederacy was cemented and invigorated by the superstition of the people, their strong attachment to ancient customs, their vices and inveterate habits and prejudices and licentious pleasures, which were freely enjoyed in the temples of the gods of their ancestors. The erection of so many churches, in so short a time, by the apostles, on the ruins of established religions thus defended, was no less wonderful than it would be to see an unexperienced child discomfit a great and well disciplined army, *tho' defended by a powerful artillery.*

Thus the exertion of divine power, in the conversion and reformation of mankind by the gospel, was another visible testimony from God, that the Christian religion is established by his authority.

SECT. VIII. *The successful propagation of Christianity was the subject of prophecy.*

AS the power of God was visibly displayed in the rapid progress of the gospel, and its astonishing influence on mankind; so this extraordinary phenomenon, in human

man society, was clearly predicted in many passages of the prophetic writings.

The author of Christianity is the most extraordinary person who ever appeared on earth, and as the most remarkable circumstances in his birth, life, death and resurrection, were distinctly foretold by the prophets, so the most observable facts respecting the rise and progress of his religion, were also predicted in the Old Testament. The passages which refer to Christianity are very numerous, and the description of circumstances very particular.

In mentioning a few instances it will be necessary to advert to the prophetic style. The founder of Christianity is called a King by the prophets, his religion a Kingdom, and those who embrace it, his Subjects. Our Saviour generally speaks of Christianity as the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of heaven. "Art thou a king then?" said Pilate unto Jesus; he answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king, to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world."

Daniel calls him "the Ancient of days," and says, "And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should  
"serve

“ serve him—his kingdom shall not be  
 “ destroyed—in these days shall the God  
 “ of heaven set up a kingdom,” &c.

Christianity, or this kingdom, it was foretold, must encounter violent opposition. “ Why do the heathen rage, and  
 “ the people imagine a vain thing? The  
 “ kings of the earth set themselves *in op-*  
 “ *position*, and the rulers take counsel  
 “ together against the Lord and his A-  
 “ nointed, or his Christ.”

It was also foretold, that their violent opposition should be unavailing; “ Thou  
 “ shalt break them with a rod of iron,  
 “ thou shalt dash them in pieces like a  
 “ potter’s vessel.”

It was also predicted, that Christianity should spring up at Zion in Jerusalem, and then rapidly spread over the world. “ I have set my King upon my holy hill  
 “ of Zion.” “ The Lord shall send the  
 “ rod of thy strength *out of Zion*; thy  
 “ people shall be willing in the day of thy  
 “ power. For *out of Zion* shall go forth  
 “ the law, and the word of the Lord  
 “ *from Jerusalem*.” The disciples were required to tarry in that city till endued with supernatural gifts, and then go and preach the gospel to all nations, “ begin-  
 “ ning at Jerusalem.”

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The small and unpromising appearance of this kingdom at first was particularly noticed by the prophets, and its sudden expansion over the Gentile world clearly foretold. It was compared to an handful of corn upon the top of a mountain, which should spread like the grass of the earth. "A little one, said Isaiah, shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation, I the Lord *will hasten it in his time.*" "Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance; to it shall the Gentiles seek: I have given him for a light of the Gentiles; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, and the isles shall wait for his laws." The rapid extension of this kingdom was to be conducted on Christ's part without violence or external force. "Behold thy king cometh unto thee meek and lowly, having salvation! he shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street; a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench."

The prophecies, from which these passages are collected, were universally interpreted by the Jews to refer to the promised Messiah and his kingdom. The fact to which they refer is a most wonderful  
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and improbable event, and cannot be accounted for without admitting the operation of divine influence : in the prophecies, where every material circumstance is described with remarkable precision, the actual exertion of God's power is particularly pointed out. " I the Lord will hasten it in his time ; I will do it saith the Lord." Can a more plain and satisfactory proof of the divine origin of Christianity be imagined or required?

With the same precision did our Saviour describe the success of his gospel, and the most material circumstances that would accompany its propagation. He did not flatter the ministers of this kingdom ; " Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues," &c. A short time before his death he bade them remember the word he had said unto them, and added, " the servant is not greater than the Lord ; if they have persecuted me they will also persecute you." Our Saviour foretold that when he should be betrayed all his disciples would forsake him and fly. If they were so timid as to forsake his person when he was alive, could it be expected

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ted that they would adhere to his cause after his ignominious death, and expose themselves to that dreadful persecution which he foretold? Improbable as this was, Jesus predicted the return of their courage and steadiness.

Is it possible that the religion of a man, crucified with every mark of ignominy and contempt, for holding opinions contrary to the tenets of his countrymen, can overturn established systems, and spread, by the preaching of a few unbefriended and illiterate fishermen? The founder of Christianity described every difficulty to be overcome, and foretold the rapid and extensive success of his persecuted ministers. Often, in parables, he described the unpromising origin and great extent of Christianity on earth. "The kingdom of heaven is like a little leaven that instantly leavens the whole lump, or a grain of mustard seed, *which indeed is the least of all seeds,*" yet in one season becomes like a spreading tree.

To account for this, our Lord foretold that the disciples, in propagating his gospel, should be endued with the power of working miracles: Mark observes, that he ordained twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth

forth to, preach, and with power also to heal sickness. After his resurrection he bade them tarry in Jerusalem, until they were *endued with power from on high*; in allusion to the original design of their election. In the exercise of this power, our Saviour foretold; "and this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations," before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was to happen in that very generation, and then shall the end of the Jewish dispensation come. The subject of these prophecies was far beyond the ordinary course of human affairs; the prophets with precision described the fact; our Saviour named the instruments who were chosen to accomplish the prediction, and conferred on them powers suited to the undertaking. Is it possible that Jesus Christ could, without the spirit of inspiration, have spoken with such certainty of the future situation of his disciples, the powers they would display, the manner in which they would be treated by the world, their success, and the short time employed in accomplishing his prediction?

## CONCLUSION.

THE candid reader must decide whether the inferences which I have drawn be sufficiently supported by those *plain and undoubted facts* from which they are deduced.

It has been shewn that hitherto the principal weapons which have been employed against revelation are glaring sophistry and gross misrepresentations, and that no objection against any passage of the scriptures can affect the main subject of disputation. Deists have artfully conducted the controversy to doubtful and intricate points, foreign to the principal question, which is, Were the Jewish legislator, and the Author of Christianity inspired?

The authenticity of the Pentateuch, and the inspiration of Moses, have been proved from a great variety of the most satisfactory evidence; and as Moses clearly foretold the appearance and character of Jesus Christ; the exact accomplishment of his predictions confirmed his own character as a prophet, and also the claim of our Lord to a divine mission. But on the testimony of Moses our Saviour's

our's claim to inspiration does not wholly rest; for all the prophets describe that great personage, in such a variety of circumstances, and with such precision, that their several predictions, taken together, agree with the authentic histories of his life, like the several parts of a well drawn likeness to the original. This renders it undoubted that Jesus Christ's mission is from heaven; and it is certain, that his character and conduct are the very reverse of those displayed by all the impostors who have appeared in the world. To these predictions, which are a clear testimony from God in his favour, was added a great variety of miracles performed in the presence of able and keen opponents, who were forced to confess their reality: to these operations Jesus Christ justly appealed, as his Father's attestation of his mission; while his numerous predictions, of events undoubtedly inscrutable, demonstrated to the world, that he possessed the spirit of inspiration.

To his resurrection from the dead, which he also foretold, he publicly referred, as another decisive proof that God had sent him; the undoubted accomplishment of this prediction, by the exertion of divine power in bringing him back from  
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the grave, fully proved the divinity of his mission.

To these invincible evidences was added a great number of others, equally satisfactory: such as, the various undoubted miracles which his disciples wrought in his name; the rapid spread of his gospel, by means evidently insufficient without divine aid; the amazing influence of Christianity on its numerous proselytes; the precision with which the prophets foretold the rise and progress of his religion; the powerful and combined opposition which it would overcome, and its final establishment and duration in the world; to which may be added Jesus Christ's own predictions of the future situation, sufferings and success of his apostles, and also of the time and manner in which the many prophecies concerning his spiritual kingdom would be accomplished.

Is it possible, in the nature of things, that such a number of convincing evidences could be combined in favour of an impostor? Sometimes one or two favourable circumstances may chance to countenance the pretensions of a deceiver, but never of such weight as could be put in the balance with those in favour of Jesus Christ

**Christ.** Besides the most artful impostors have sooner or later been detected of falsehood and deceit, but notwithstanding all the powerful and combined opposition against Moses, Jesus and the Apostles, no falsehood nor deceit was ever proved upon any of them.

I will therefore conclude this subject with a most earnest entreaty, that the reader would once more examine and combine with attention and candour all those evidences which have been advanced in vindication of Jesus Christ's divine mission; and then solemnly, as an accountable creature, deduce *that inference* from the whole, concerning our Lord and his gospel, *for which he must hereafter answer unto God.*

**F I N I S.**



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